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GIFTING this
WONDERFUL
WORLD with
BLESSINGS
10!

GAM·BLE
SCRAM
BLE!

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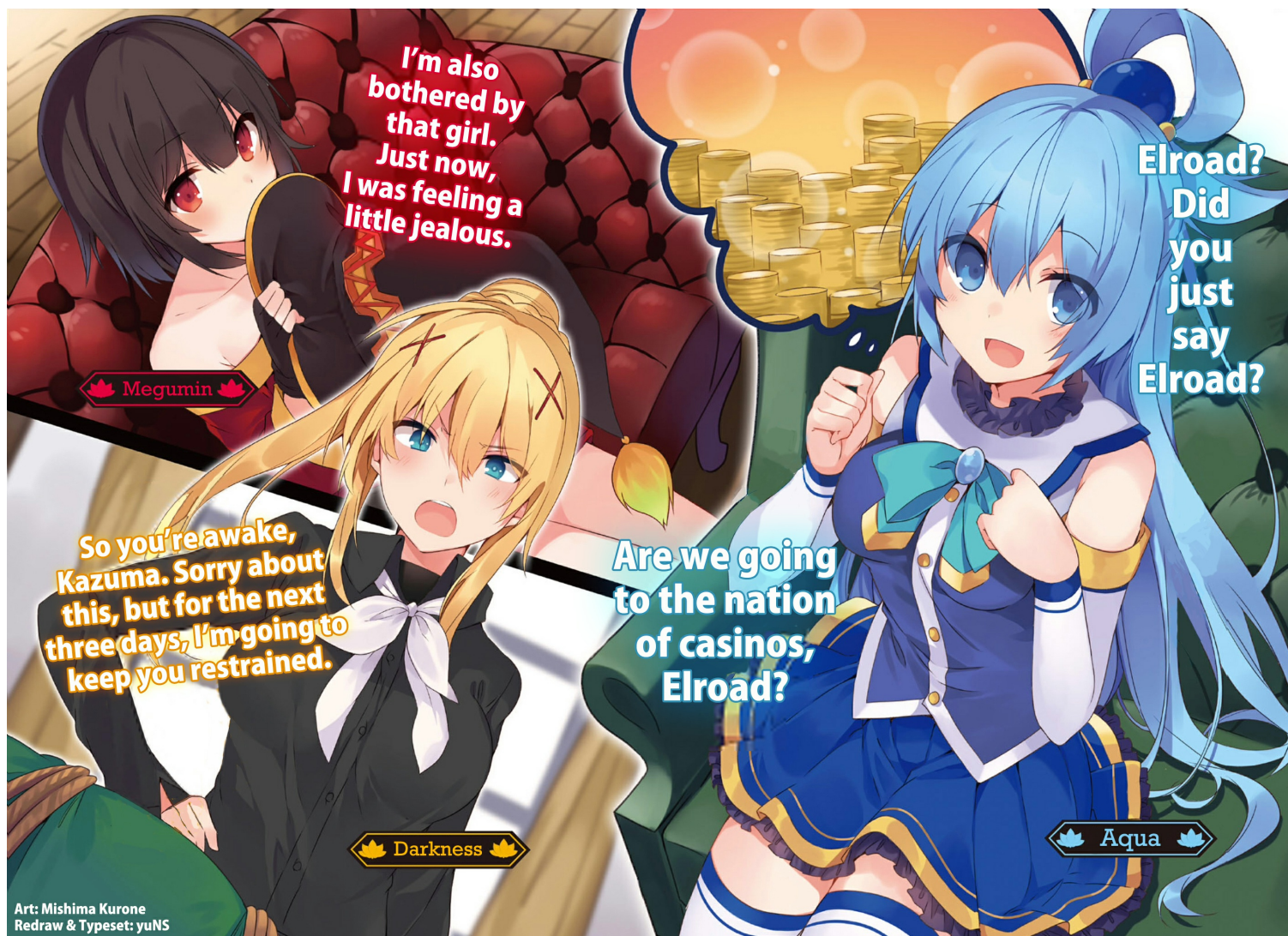
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GAM·BLE
SCRAM
BLE!







Art: Mishima Kurone
Redraw & Typeset: yuNS

Please
continue to
remain in
my nation,
Onii-sama.
I will work
hard to
make it one
that you will
forever want
to live in.

✧ Iris ✧

GIFTING **WONDERFUL** this **WORLD** with **BLESSINGS!10**



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Prologue

As I felt the gentle shaking against my back, I said to Iris, who never seemed to get tired of staring at the ring: “Hey, I’ve told you a bunch of times, but that’s just some cheap 400 Eris thing. Once we get back to the capital, I’ll make sure to buy a better one alright?”

“It’s fine! I don’t want any other ring, I’m fine with this one!”

How many times have we had this conversation?

“Geez, you’ve kept this attitude for a while now. What’s it supposed to mean? Are you trying to show off to me? If you want it taken away so badly, how about I rob it from you!?”

“W-What do you want!? Are you looking for a fight!?”

Once again, Megumin – in a fit of temper – tried to take the ring from Iris.

How many times has this happened already?

Sitting in my cramped carriage, I said to Megumin, who had grabbed onto Iris: “Don’t be so angry Megumin. Didn’t I already buy you an Elroad rice cracker? It was more expensive than that ring you know?”

“It isn’t a problem of price! That was tasty and all, but I can’t help but feel that I’ve lost in some way!”

Hearing Megumin say such annoying things, Iris retreated a few steps, as if to hide the ring that was worn on her finger.

“It’s because I am Onii-sama’s little sister. Little Sisters are special, unlike plain friends!”

“W-, What do you mean? Why have I been downgraded to ‘Kazuma’s friend’!? I am Kazuma’s close companion and someone who lives in the same house as him! Beyond friends, we’re basically family!”

From the backseat of the carriage, came comfortable sleeping sounds.

“Then as his sister, we are family! That means that I am an existence that is

beyond Megumin-san right!?”

“Alright, since you’ve been asking for a fight this entire time, why don’t I take you on!?”

As I listened to their noisy voices,

“Royalty is strong! I absolutely, absolutely won’t lose to you!!”

I decided to go to sleep—

Chapter 1: Objecting this Sudden Engagement!

Part 1

The demon king army general, the evil god Wolbach.

She was a high-value bounty target who – despite her true powers being sealed – was able to use explosion magic to whittle down the elite forces of the royal capital.

After laying the feared demon king army general and evil god to rest, the impression of us being ‘flukes’ was swept away, and we were officially recognized as a strong party.

And then, I, who had become famous for leading the elites to defeat the demon king army—

“I want to go catch a wild dullahan.”

“Wait, I don’t get what you’re talking about.”

—Was currently sprawled on the sofa in the large living room of the mansion.

In this relaxed manner, I said that to Megumin, who looked at me with a perplexed expression.

“What happened to you Kazuma? Did you finally open your eyes to the Axis cult, and now you want to go hunt the undead? I’m really happy about that, but there’s no way you’re gonna find a wild dullahan. For now, just be patient and hunt skeletons or ghosts instead.”

I explained my reason to Aqua, who kept spouting idiotic things.

“The reason I want to look for a wild dullahan is to learn the ‘Premonition of Death’ skill. In order to succeed with a certain plan of mine, that skill is absolutely necessary. Do you think there are any places where I could find one?”

“Hah—!? The lich’s ‘Drain Touch’ is fine, but why do you always want to learn

all these dirty skills!? Hand over your adventurer card! As long you have points remaining, I'll make you learn as many of my party performance skills as you can!"

"Oi stop it, you idiot! Don't decide things on your own! More importantly, hurry up and hand over your healing magic!"

Aqua jumped on top of me to try to steal my adventurer card. Meanwhile Darkness, whose lap was being rested on by Chomusuke, tilted her head in doubt, and looked at me with a gaze of suspicion.

Since we've returned from our last adventure, this furball had begun to show prejudice against Aqua. Whenever it had the chance, it would go and bite Aqua's hagoromo. Basically, it had grown to become more cat-like.

"Why exactly do you want to learn such a dangerous skill? Also, in terms of rank, dullahans are only behind vampires and liches you know? As if you could meet something like that out in the open."

While I had expected this answer, I still felt a bit disappointed.

In a world where a lich owned a store and a devil worked part-time, it wouldn't be a surprising for a dullahan to be operating a haunted house.

I'm not sure if Megumin could tell from my reaction, but she questioned me with a discomforted expression.

"What exactly are you thinking, Kazuma? If you want to learn such a powerful skill, that means you want to fight some strong opponent right? Is my power not good enough? Is there no place for my explosion magic that has buried countless demon king army generals?*

To dispel the unease of my companion, who had asked me to rely on her, I showed her my best smile.

"No, it's not like that. Thanks, Megumin, there is indeed a use for your explosion magic. Well, in the end, I guess I can't ask for too much huh... Alright Megumin, let's go to the neighboring nation! Then, once we get there, we'll fire one shot at the capital of that nation, and send a threatening letter. 'If you don't want to be struck by explosion magic again, then abandon your engagement with Princess Iris. As a representative of the demon king army, I do not recognize

your engagement with her—”

“Are you an idiot!? I thought you started acting weird ever since you received that letter from Iris-sama; so you were actually thinking of doing something so pointless! Could it be, that you wanted to learn the dullahan’s ‘Premonition of Death’ because you wanted to curse Iris-sama’s fiancé!? Also, where did the demon king army come from!?”

Hearing my perfect plan, Darkness suddenly got angry.

“What do you mean by pointless! Yeah, I want to use the skill to curse Iris’ fiancé from a distance. Then I’ll say, ‘Haha-n, this is the handiwork of the demon king army isn’t it? Stealing away a princess is the demon king’s job. Since you stole away the important work of the demon king, you earned his hatred. Well, here we have an archpriest that can dispel the curse, but there’s no saying when you might get cursed again. Until the demon king is defeated, I strongly recommend you cancel your engagement...”

“The worst... You’re the worst kind of man possible! To use precious skill points to do something so stupid, do you have no shame!?”

Following Darkness, even Megumin began to berate me.

“You’re saying this to me now, after I’ve already learned the ‘escape’ and ‘cooking’ skills? Recently, in order to determine whether or not the adventurers at the guild were spreading bad rumors about me, I even learned the ‘lip reading’ skill.”

“Y-You’re really going in a direction that’s unrelated to adventuring aren’t you? Anyway, I won’t allow you to bring Megumin along to enact such a stupid plan.”

Why are people who only put points in explosion magic and defense skills telling me this?

I want to tell them that ‘Before complaining about others, please put your own points into useful skills’.

...But, unexpectedly, Aqua became the only person who wanted to be involved in my plan.

“Can I join in on your plan? Specifically, I want to know more about the part where you frame everything on the demon king army. After all, one of the daily activities of the Axis cult is to spread bad opinions about them.”

“Just to make sure, the reason the demon king attacks humanity isn’t because of the Axis cult right?”

Well, I did have my reasons to plan something like this.

The other day, I received a letter from Iris.

The letter wrote that she would go and meet her fiancé from the neighboring country for the first time, and she wanted me to be her bodyguard.

Given my obligations as her brother, there was no way I would refuse her request.

For the sake of fighting against the suspicious person that tricked my cute little sister, I sharpened my katana that I’ve never had to use before, and began to make various other preparations, but—

“Well, I guess it can’t be helped. Let us use a frontal attack. After accepting the bodyguard request, we’ll do whatever we can to prevent the worst from happening. Since I have a lot of skill points to spare, I’ll use them to learn some useful skill when the time comes for it...”

I hadn’t noticed at this moment.

As I hoisted my chin on my hand, and began to brainstorm ideas on my own, Darkness looked at me with an unscrupulous gaze.

Part 2

The day after that happened.

“—Oi. What exactly is this supposed to mean? Explain.”

When I woke up a bit after noon, I found myself tied up on my bed.

“So you’re awake, Kazuma. Sorry about this, but for the next three days I’m going to keep you restrained. What? Don’t worry about it. You’ll be served the best food during this time, and I will take care of you personally. If there’s anything you want then I’ll tell my butlers to go buy it.”

Having invaded my room at some point, Darkness showed a proud expression in the broad daylight, all whilst saying stupid things.

The summer was about to end and the fall season was quickly approaching.

So it’s unlikely that the heat got to her head.

“What’s up with you all of a sudden? Why did you tie me up? Taking your fetish into consideration, aren’t our positions reversed? Could it be that you love me so much that you can no longer resist your urges?”

“As if I would like a fickle man like you! And don’t talk about my fetish, tying you up is completely unrelated to my personal interests.”

Darkness seemed to have lost her cool.

“You’re just as bothersome as usual. Isn’t it too late to say anything when you’ve already kissed me on the cheek? Being a dead-dere isn’t popular nowadays you know?”

<TL note: dead-dere is a way of calling a person that refuses to show direct affection until they die, out of pride.>

“Who’s a dead-dere! Also, this is unrelated to that incident a while ago. You and I had that kind of dizzy atmosphere here and there back then, but... Well nevermind that, that’s not what we need to talk about. What we need to discuss is about Iris-sama.”

After telling me off, Darkness cleared her throat and—

“Sorry about this Kazuma. About Iris-sama’s bodyguard request that we received the other day, I’m going to send a letter to reject it. Iris-sama will be leaving for the neighboring nation in three days, so until I’ve confirmed that she’s left, I’m going to keep you tied up. So you need to act mature and persevere for now.”

With a slightly apologetic expression, she said such things...

“Are you kidding me!? That’s the reason you tied me up! At this rate, my little sister will be married to that suspicious man you know!?”

“As if you have the right to say that as a commoner whose origins are completely unknown! If you want to convince me that you’re not a suspicious man, then tell me about your past! ...Yes, I’ve actually meant to ask you for a long time. In what nation were you born? Where did you learn all those strange things? Why are you lacking common sense... things like that...!”

Ignoring Darkness who began to say some troublesome things, I began to shout.

“Megumin—! Aqua—! Help me! I’m being imprisoned by a female pervert—!”

“H-, Hey, stop saying weird things! Also, too bad, those two are currently away. What’s left is to call for my retainers, and have you moved along with the bed to my home. If I let you become a bodyguard, then this nation will definitely run into some trouble with foreign relations. This is for the sake of my nation, so just be patient.”

“Just what kind of foreign relation problems will arise if I become a bodyguard! I learned the proper noble etiquette during the time I lived at the castle, so I won’t do anything disrespectful! So let me go!”

“Don’t you dare say anything! You’re the living definition of ‘disrespect’! If you act obediently, I’ll let you eat delicacies that you normally won’t be able to get your hands on. And aren’t you a NEET at heart anyway? All you have to do is lie down while I take care of you. Not a bad deal right?”

Darkness bent and looked down as though she were talking to a child, but I realized it was not the time to say that.

“... I guess you’re right. Alright, I get it.”

“Y-You get it...!? Well, a lot of trouble has happened recently. Occasionally, spending time with you like this is...”

Not too bad.

Darkness showed a bashful smile, and it seemed like she would continue to be that way—

“Well then, I’ve had an intense urge to go to the toilet for a while now, so could you do something about this quickly?”

And I, who was tied up on the bed, flatly said this.

“...Eh?”

“Don’t eh me, you said it yourself didn’t you? That you would personally take care of me. Naturally, that means taking care of ‘down under’ too right?”

“.....Eh—”

Darkness froze in place, dumbfounded.

“Anyway, hurry up and follow my order. Oi Darkness, go and fetch the urine bottle.”

“Eeeehhhh-!?”

“Don’t eeeehhh me, hurry up. Geez, this ojou-sama is really useless. Weren’t you the one who said that in the first place? Now come on, hurry up and move it already.”

This wasn’t sexual harassment.

Since I couldn’t move my body, there’s no other way.

Yes, there’s no other way.

“N-N-, No—! That’s not what I meant! It’s true that I said that I would take care of you, but that’s not what I meant, so please wait!”

“I can’t wait anymore. ‘Going to bathroom when I wake up’ is a natural phenomenon. That said, this is something that you have to do everyday alright? After all, I’m not gonna force this job on your servants who I’ve never seen or met. Now, hurry it up already.”

“Uuum.... b-but...”

Despite her self-assured declaration a moment ago, Darkness was now bewildered.

“Ah, this is gonna get ugly, I can’t hold on any longer. How long are you gonna stay embarrassed? I helped you go to the bathroom recently as well remember? I even helped you remove your underwear and get toilet paper. We’ve already known each other for such a long time, so don’t be ashamed now. Even if it’s just the lower half, hurry up and release the binds.”

As the time of nil approached, Darkness said to me in a soft voice.

“...It can’t be released.”

“...Huh?”

Darkness lowered her head apologetically.

“I didn’t think about the problems down there. W-, What should we do, the rope I used to restrain you is a fairly powerful magic tool. It can’t be released halfway. Basically, for the next three days, you will stay...”

“You idiot! What am I gonna do!? Are you saying that for the next three days I’m gonna have to piss in my pants!? Oi stop kidding around! If that really happened to me, then I’ll make sure the same happens to you sometime alright!?”

“H-, Happens to me...”

“It’s an emergency situation so stop anticipating it! Ah, Damnit!”

Using the only functioning mind, I reaffirmed the current situation.

I was currently tied in a rubber-like rope all the way to my knees, as if I had been tied by ‘bind’ magic.

It looks easy to cut at first glance, but since she said that it was a strong magic tool, I shouldn’t expect anything.

However, it should be possible to loosen the rope.

“Oi Darkness, with your strength it should be possible to make a gap in the rope. Focus on shifting the rope tying up the lower half of my body. That way, I

should be at least be able to get some sweet release.

“I-, I got it, leave it to me!”

With her face flushed red, she began to pull on the rope.

While the ropes were tied tightly around my body, she managed to make enough of a gap to pull ‘it’ out.

“Alright, good work. Now there’s a urine bottle over there so bring it over.”

“... Why do you have something like this? Why exactly would you...”

“This is something like a NEET’s best friend. After all, there are times during the winter when it’s so cold that you don’t want to get out of bed, or it’s too bothersome to go to the toilet in the morning, right? At those important junctures, it’s a treasure.”

“Just how far are you... Well nevermind, it saved us this time. I’ll put it here.”

With a perplexed expression, Darkness placed the bottle next to me...

“Oi, I can’t go like this right? There’s no way I can’t go if you don’t pull down my underwear.”

“Ehh-!?”

This girl, what does she want me to do in this situation?

“Don’t ehh me. My hands are tied up and I can’t move my body you know? In the first place, weren’t you the one who caused this situation? It’s gonna spill at this rate, so hurry up!”

“E-E-E-Even if you say that-! Ah geez...”

Appearing as though she was about to cry, Darkness averted her gaze and stretched her hands towards me.

However, as she was pulling down my pants, she showed a strange expression.

“...Hm? Oi Kazuma, your pants are being pulled by something and won’t come down. This is...”

“Sorry, it’s a physiological phenomenon that happens when waking up.”

“.....”

“Wa-, WAAAAHHHHH!”

“OWOWOWOOWWOWOWOW STOP! STOP! IT’S GONNA BREAK!”

Although I didn’t specify what it was, I completely forgot about how I happily sexually harassed Darkness just a moment ago, and began to shriek.

“What the heck are you thinking!? I almost got a class-change in gender you know!? You better remember this, after I get untied I’m definitely gonna make you cry!”

“I’ve already cried but... Hey Kazuma, shouldn’t we just give up? I mean, once Aqua comes back, we can just use her ‘Create Water’ and ‘Purification’ skills to clean it up...”

“You want me to leak!? You want me to give up everything and leak!? Is that what you’re saying!? Stop saying stupid things and move it! This won’t work if you turn your eyes away! Since this is all your fault, take responsibility and look! Come on, hurry up!”

Darkness, who looked directly at my lower half this time, once again put her hands on my pants.

“Ku-, why did this happen....! All I wanted to do was to keep you away and protect Iris-sama.... b-but, for me – a lady of a noble family – to be forced to do something so precarious, and to be ordered to look down there... This situation isn’t too bad, now that I think about it...”

“Oi, stop saying stupid things to yourself and move it! There’s no time! No, I’m done for, I can’t hold on any longer!”

“W-, Wait Kazuma, I’ll help you right now alright!? Since it’s come to this, we might as well get this over with quickly! Ah geez, if Megumin or Aqua see this...”

Then, when Darkness said such—

I felt a gaze looking this way. Turning around to look, I saw Aqua shuddering in surprise. The look on her face was like a housekeeper who saw everything ‘unfold’.

“Awawawawawa.... To think that Darkness and Kazuma developed such a relationship... Well, I’m gonna go to the guild and announce it to everyone ok!?”

““WAIT!””

“—Fu, you saved me Aqua. I was almost forced to leak by this perverted girl over here.”

After Aqua used her magic to release the binds of the magic tool, I returned to the room with a refreshed feeling. Looking as if she was about to cry, Darkness murmured.

“Uu... I-, I’m not a perverted girl...”

“Well I don’t really care about the details since this isn’t the first time that Darkness has been a pervert, but just what kind of play were you guys doing?”

“A-, Aqua!?”

For some reason, Darkness seemed to be shocked by what Aqua said. Ignoring her, I explained to Aqua.

“Recently, we got a bodyguard request letter from Iris right? And like, for some reason, Darkness is really against me accepting the request, so she decided to tie and lock me up in her own house. After amusing herself with me for a while, she planned to reject the request.”

“Darkness, if you’re gonna do that, then of course you deserve to be called a perverted girl, you know?”

“Just who is gonna amuse themselves with you! ...But this time around, it’s actually really bad. The person Iris-sama is engaged to is the first prince of the neighboring nation, Elroad. Furthermore, it seems like this prince is also extremely troublesome to deal with. If you act like you usually do, and do something disrespectful, there’ll surely be some foreign affairs problems.”

A troublesome first prince.

Now that I’ve heard that, there’s all the more reason to protect Iris.

Hearing that, Aqua’s eyes began to glimmer and shine.

“Elroad? Did you just say Elroad? Are we going to the nation of casinos, Elroad?”

I didn't really get why, but it seems that the name of that nation had pulled at Aqua's heartstrings.

Well, to be fair, the 'nation of casinos' had a nice ring to it.

Seeing Aqua's unprecedented behavior, Darkness' expression froze up.

"Aqua, just making sure that you know, but if we're going, we'll be performing this bodyguard request, and not to play around alright? That's right, if you want to go to the casinos in Elroad that badly, then let's all go there another time for a vacation! Since everyone has a lot of money, we don't really need to work while we're there, we can just go there to genuinely play around!"

Although Darkness desperately tried to convince her, just looking at Aqua's expression was enough for anyone to know that she had already set her mind on it.

I nodded my head in satisfaction—

"Alright, it seems that Aqua also wants to accept this request! Well then, after Megumin comes back, why don't we take a majority vote? Well, even if I say that, since we haven't done any quests or travelled anywhere recently, I don't think she's gonna be against it!"

"Uuuuu..."

Seeing Darkness hold her head with her hands, I showed a confident smile.

Part 3

“No.”

Evening that day—

I’m not sure whether she went to release her daily dose of explosion magic, but Yunyun had carried Megumin home. In an exhausted state she flatly rejected me.

Around the time we returned from slaying Wolbach, she had become rebellious.

Even though she usually forces me to accompany her on her explosion walks, recently, she’s only gone with Yunyun.

“What do you mean by ‘no’? Even though, you’re always the first one to agree, saying that ‘I want to defeat a powerful enemy I’ve never seen before’, why not this time?”

Megumin, who sunk into the sofa in the living room, slightly turned her head to look at Aqua and Darkness preparing dinner in the kitchen. Then, she glanced at me, and said.

“There’s no particular reason. Geez, this man. Normally, you’re unwilling to work even if we force you. So why is it you choose to accept the request immediately once Iris gets involved?”

What she said was unusually laudable. In a provoking manner, I replied.

“Oh, what’s with you? Jealous?”

But Megumin didn’t get angry like she usually would. Instead, she looked at me straight in the eye and said.

“Yes, I’m jealous. Since all that has happened, shouldn’t you pay a little more attention to me?”

“Eh... Ah, right.”

Without a hint of playfulness in her expression, Megumin replied in a frank manner. Instead, I was the one’s whose face felt hot with a troubled expression.

What she meant by ‘all that’ was probably the night of that day, where we almost crossed the line.

Rather, was she the type of person to say something like this?

She would usually burst out in anger or lose all composure. I felt that she was an unrestrained sort of person.

“Kazuma, does Iris really weigh on your mind that much?”

Replying to Megumin, who was staring at me—

“N-, No well, I just can’t help but feel worried about that girl. Rather than someone of the opposite gender, I worry about her because she – due of her position – tends to worry too much about how people think. As a result, she’s not allowed to do anything selfish, and I can’t help but get the feeling that she’s always lonely. So that’s why I care so much about my little sister.”

I might be a NEET, but I’m not a lolicon.

I only see Iris as a cute little sister.

Though, in the future when she grows up; if she tells me that she wants to be onii-chan’s bride, then I won’t hesitate to fulfill her wish.

Towards Megumin’s unexpected words, I began to talk faster, and worried about whether or not my face became red.

“Well but, if you really don’t want to then I’ll think of some other way. If we’re gonna go be bodyguards, then I want everyone to go. It’s a shame that I won’t be able to see Iris, but...”

“Let’s accept.”

Then, Megumin cut me off, and released a short sigh.

“I’m also bothered by that girl. Just now, I was feeling a bit jealous. That’s all.”

“O-, Oh.”

What should I say about her frank goodwill?

The edges of my ears felt really hot.

Having fallen into the clutches of a girl younger than myself, I began to

consider whether I should use 'Freeze' on my hot face. As I was pondering, Darkness and Aqua brought the food out from the kitchen.

"Oh you're home Megumin. We're having a feast tonight! ...What happened Kazuma, your face is flushed you know?"

"N-N-, Nothing happened! Right Megumin!?"

In contrast to me, whose face was flushed red, Megumin bore a composed expression, as she showed a gentle smile to Darkness.

Why did she act so dignified now? Doesn't that make me, who seems so uneasy, look like an idiot?

"You know, Megumin, if you came home earlier, you would have seen an interesting sight. When I got back, Darkness had Kazuma tied up in a bed, and was about to amuse herself using him."

"Oho?"

Hearing Aqua's needless statements, Megumin's expression seemed to twitch.

"Wait, Aqua, I didn't plan to amuse myself using him! It's true that I tied him up, but like I explained before..."

Darkness, who was carrying the plates, took a short glance at Megumin, and hurriedly began to explain, but—

"No, if Aqua had come home any later, then Darkness was gonna pull down my pants. She really saved me you know?"

"Wha—!?"

As I added on, Megumin's eye began to shine a bright crimson.

"...Well, Darkness is in heat all year round, and while what she does to whoever has no relation to me whatsoever, she's still the lady of a great family. That's why I can't approve of her forcing herself onto men, really—!"

"N-N-N-N-No...! It's not like that Megumin, there are circumstances! Also, don't say that I'm in heat all year round!"

While Darkness hurriedly explained herself, the rest of us already had our eyes on the food.

“Hm, are you curious about this Kazuma? As expected of someone who goes with me to food festivals, your eye for food is quite good. Yes, our dinner for tonight is blowfish! Not only that, this in particular is known as the king of blowfish, ‘*paradise blowfish*’. Although its poison is a stage stronger, it’s a delicacy that’s rated by gourmets as ‘I don’t care if I die after eating this’! Also, the blowfish is currently in season as well.”

“I’m not sure whether the blowfish’s name is talking about what happens while you’re eating it, or after that. Well, to think that you had a license for blowfish preparation... I thought that you were a person with a lot of talents, but this is really something else huh?”

Megumin and I quickly seated ourselves, and looked at the dish with glimmering eyes.

Blowfish sashimi, blowfish hot pot, egg custard.

A side dish that looked like soft roe, as well as an earthenware brazier with blowfish fins.

Faced with these mouth-watering dishes, I couldn’t resist any longer, and stretched my hand out to...

“No way I would have a license. Tell me if your body feels a bit numb ok? I’ll cast detoxification magic.”

“Oi.”

It’s because of things like these that I don’t like the roughness of this alternate world.

I quickly returned the egg custard that I took, but then, I heard a clinking sound from beside me.

“Tasty tasty.”

“Don’t eat it, the poison hasn’t been filtered out you know!?”

Megumin, who had also taken the egg custard, ate it with an expression of joy.

Not only that, at some point, Darkness had stabbed a blowfish sashimi with the fork, and fed it into her mouth.

For real? Don't these guys feel any hesitation?

Could it be that the people living in this world all eat blowfish with detoxification magic?

Since this was a world with magic, it does make sense, but...

As if to get revenge for messing with her, Darkness showed a crude smile towards me, and said:

"What is it Kazuma? You're afraid of poison despite being an adventurer? With Aqua, whose first-rate only when it comes to priest skills, there's nothing to be afraid of."

"Hey Darkness, did you just say 'only when it comes to priest skills'?"

"Not at all."

Saying that, Darkness moved on to the next dish.

Next to me, Megumin took the soup from the hot pot, and sipped it with joy.

.....Blowfish huh?

Now that I think about it, I didn't eat blowfish back when I was in Japan.

"That's right. Other things aside, your healing magic is really first-class. Alright!"

"Hey Kazuma, did you just say 'other things aside'?"

"Not at all. ...This is tasty! What is this, this is super tasty!"

Eating the blowfish hot pot, I couldn't help but vocalize my feelings for its taste.

With my vocabulary, I could only describe this as 'super tasty'.

Seeing us, Aqua showed an extremely satisfied smile.

"It's nice that you're all happy. Originally, these blowfish were meant to be used by Cecily for attracting new believers. Her amazing strategy involved attracting passersby with the charm of this blowfish. Then, once they eat it, with the condition of detoxification magic, she will force them to convert to the Axis cult. Well, she was taken away by the police for some reason."

“So you were planning to do something like that? Didn’t I tell you to cut your relations with that girl?”

But well, it’s thanks to her that we get to taste this blowfish delicacy, so she has my appreciation.

By the time I moved on to eat the thinly cut blowfish sashimi, Aqua had already grilled the blowfish fins and made the hirezake. She then began to drink.

<TL Note: Hirezake is ‘hot sake with fish fins’, most commonly with blowfish.>

Aqua, who drank hirezake with the blowfish roe as an accompaniment, no longer seemed like a goddess or a heroine. Rather, she was the spitting image of a middle aged uncle.

“By the way, don’t the organs of the blowfish have particularly strong poison? Don’t get caught up and eat too much okay? Your presence is meaningless if you – the magic user – are paralyzed and can’t move when it matters alright?”

“Idiot, what I’m wearing are divine treasures you know? It’s an amazing article that can nullify any harmful conditions. There’s no way the poison of a blowfish could have any effect you know?”

Now that I think about it, we had this conversation before didn’t we?

I was worried that there would be a flaw in this, considering this person, but if it’s like this, then...!

——How much blowfish have I managed to enjoy?

“Fufufu, that’s up Kafuma. At may fevel, may resistasnce to roison is quite...”

“Your tongue is so numb I can’t even tell what you’re saying.”

Hearing Darkness, who wasn’t able to talk clearly after eating a vast amount of the most poisonous parts, I decided it was about time to cast detox magic.

Suddenly, something leaned heavily against me.

In front of everyone, Megumin, whose face was flushed red, leaned her head on my shoulder with a fawning expression plastered on her face...

“Hm-Oi Aqua! This firlish... Eh, I fan’t speak clearly...”

Turning to look at Aqua, the blood ran from my face.

Aqua's face was plastered to the table.

What happened to this girl's divine treasure? Didn't it nullify poison!?

Darkness, who noticed the current state of the situation, hurriedly lifted Aqua off the table and...!"

"Suhaha—"

"You liffle, don't fet drunk so fuickly! Get up! I shed get up—!"



Part 4

The next morning—

“Hey Kazuma, do you really want to take Iris-sama’s request? Let me explain. Even if we disregard your disrespectful attitude, I think that with our actual abilities, we’ll probably fail the bodyguard request. What other party besides ours would be almost wiped out by blowfish?”

“What happened yesterday was not a failure as adventurers, so it doesn’t count. We’re the ones that have defeated the most demon king army generals in this world, and the number one party of Axel. No one can complain about us.”

After almost being wiped out from food poisoning yesterday, we completed our preparations to travel to the capital, and went to the teleport store in Axel.

“Aqua went to drop Emperor Zell and Chomusuke off somewhere, but she’s late isn’t she? Did something happen?”

We were currently waiting for Aqua, who went to drop off Emperor Zell and Chomusuke at Wiz’s store.

That girl didn’t start a fight with Vanir did she?

As I was pondering this, Aqua, who carried her luggage on her back, finally arrived.

“I’ve dropped them off. When that depraved masked guy saw Chomusuke, he said ‘Ohoho, Moi looked away for a mere moment, but another interesting development has occurred ho!? FUHAHAHAHAHA!’ and started rolling around or something. Well, there shouldn’t be any problems either way.”

What did he mean by interesting?

Could that thing actually become that onee-san when it grows up?

Although I was really curious, this wasn’t the time for that.

“Oi, you guys, let me be the one to talk with the teleport store’s owner. I’ve wanted to complain about this place since forever.”

“Complain? You, did you have some sort of fight with the store owner?”

Darkness inquired with suspicion. Without replying, I opened the doors to the teleport store.

I recalled what happened a couple months ago.

After having been forcibly separated with my Iris, my little sister, I tried to meet her in secret.

“Yo old geezer, I’m here again! Could you please teleport me to the capital?”

“Welco-... Aren’t you the wanted man, Satou Kazuma!? Didn’t I already tell you that you’re not allowed to teleport to the capital!? Is your memory that bad!?”

Eavesdropping on our conversation, Darkness was speechless.

“Y-, You, I look away for a moment and you tried to go meet Iris-sama?”

“Yeah. I don’t know whether or not it’s the handiwork of that noble named Claire, but I’m apparently not allowed to teleport to the capital. But not this time. Here old guy, look at this! This is a written invitation from royalty. This is official, so don’t get it dirty alright!?”

Saying this, I took out the letter from Iris. The store owner showed an expression of raw detest.

“Is this real? You didn’t forge this somewhere right? A while ago, you even threatened me by saying ‘If you mess with me, who’s related to the Dustiness family, something bad’s gonna happen’, remember?”

“Oi Kazuma, come here for a moment. I want to have a word with you.”

“I refuse. Oi old geezer, this girl here is the lady of the Dustiness house. Look, if you live in this city, you should have some impression of her right? Then you know I wasn’t lying right?”

I asked these questions whilst resisting Darkness’ pull. On the other hand, the store owner’s face turned paler by the second.

Seeing the store owner’s reaction, Darkness desperately pulled me to a corner of the store.

“Don’t just tell me ‘I refuse’! Hey Kazuma, you didn’t use my name to do any weird things right? You didn’t abuse the authority of my family to do anything,

right?”

“I didn’t do anything more than mention your name when Aqua was kicked out of a high-class restaurant because of her clothing ok?”

“I didn’t do anything more than say that ‘I would have a word with Darkness’ if the carpenters refused to perform maintenance and reconstruction on the Axis cult’s church.”

“I didn’t do anything more than say that ‘this is something that Lalatina-ojou-sama will eat, so please give me the tasty parts please’ when I was buying the ingredients for dinner.”

Hearing what we said, Darkness powerlessly fell to the floor.

She covered her face with her hands, as if to hide her embarrassment. She looked like as though she was going to burst into tears.

Seeing Darkness’ guilty and pitiful visage, the store owner said with a caring tone.

“Judging from that reaction, I can see that you are a member of the Dustiness house. Uhm, about your request to teleport to the capital, I won’t charge you, so...”

“Oh, excuse me then—”

“I’ll pay! I’ll pay the full price! I can’t allow myself to cause anymore trouble for the citizens of this town!”

Interrupting me, who accepted the offer as if it was a given, Darkness jumped to her feet and retrieved her purse.

“Oi Kazuma, I have a lot of things to ask you after we finish this request. Mark my words. The same goes for the two of you over there! Don’t try to pretend that you’re not involved!”

The three of us surrounded Darkness, who promptly moved to pay the store owner, and pushed her into the magic circle.

“Geez, what a stubborn ojou-sama. As your party members, aren’t we basically family? We give and we take, and we help each other in times of need.

Regardless of whether you’re a noble or not, our attitudes won’t change. That’s

what it means to be companions you see. When the time comes, feel free to use my name as the number one adventurer of Axel as well.”

“That right Darkness. Tell me anytime you want to borrow the authority of the Axis church. I’ll help you out.”

“Darkness, although I was a bit surprised when I found out that you were a noble, to me, Darkness is just the Darkness I know. If you’d like to borrow of the power of the Crimson Magic clan, feel free to talk to me. I can write a letter to everyone in the village.”

Hearing what we said, Darkness showed a genuinely happy expression for a fleeting moment.

“Y-, You guys...! ...Hm? No wait, this is strange! No matter how I think about it, there won’t be a time where I need to borrow anyone’s name or the power of the Axis church or the Crimson Magic clan...”

As Darkness made a senseless fuss, we moved onto the teleport circle, and stood on standby.”

It was then—

“Hey Kazuma, did you know this? Apparently, when teleporting, there’s a small chance for a rare accident to happen that causes you fuse with other small animals that get inside the magic circle! According to some rumors, this is how werewolves and lamias are made you see! You see!”

Aqua, as if to scare me, suddenly said things like this, but...

“Then next time, why don’t we capture three or so goblins and teleport them with you? If the fusion goes correctly, I think your intelligence might increase.”

“What are you saying you stupid NEET. You’re the one that needs to teleport with ants and raise your body to NEET ratio.”

“Ah, uhm... An accident will really happen, so please stand still in the circle...”

As the store owner timidly muttered with a troubled expression, I gave him the signal.

“Alright old geezer, send us to the capital!”

Until now, all big requests that I've undertaken were all a matter of circumstance.

But not this time.

I have accepted this on my own accord, for the sake of keeping a prince I haven't seen before away from my little sister.

"Wha, wait...!"

Ignoring Darkness, who seemed to have some complaint, the store owner chanted the magic at us.

"'Teleport'!"

Chapter 2: Teaching these Sheltered Ladies!

Part 1

After being sent to the capital through 'Teleport', we arrived in front of a familiar castle.

The two guards standing in front of the castle looked at us with dubious gazes.

"Halt! Those who do not have business here may not enter! This is not a place for adventurers!"

I handed Iris' letter to the two oppressive guards as if I was showing them an insignia.

"I am the Satou Kazuma, an adventurer from the town of Axel. We have taken a request from princess Iris. Is there a problem?"

Seeing the royal insignia on the envelope, the faces of the two guards turned pale, and they immediately readjusted their posture.

"E-, Excuse my manners...! I will immediately go and call my superiors, so please wait a moment! May I be entrusted with the envelope?"

"Mm, I suppose that's fine."

As I showed a slightly overbearing attitude towards the two frightened guards, Darkness poked me with her elbow.

The guard that was confirming the contents of their letter, slightly tilted his head.

"Huh, the letter inside is rather damaged. This is...?"

"My, please don't mind it! You know, a lot of things happen when you're an adventurer right? You get it? Monsters and stuff you see!"

"Ahh, I see... Well then, please wait a moment at the waiting room over here."

There's no way that I could tell them that I ripped a letter from royalty to shreds out of rage. I meekly followed one of the guards to the waiting room.

As everyone was getting themselves seated as they liked, the eyes of the guard that brought us here began to shine. He informed us about the rumor that was spreading through the capital.

“—With regards to Satou Kazuma-dono, your name has recently become famous in the capital you see? I heard that, you lent your aid to the fortress at the very front line, which had come under the leadership of Dustiness-sama, and led our forces to victory in a seemingly trifling series of battles. It is often said that; Carrying tact, cleverness, and a countless number of skills, is the leader, Kazuma-dono. Together, with the crusader, Dustiness-kyo, a lovely arch-wizard whom carries an amazing amount of magic power, and finally a plasterer, your group is an amazingly skilled party.”

“Hey, I just wanna say that you left out the existence of the lovely archpriest.”

In any case, we were also the party that laid to rest the greatest number of demon king army generals.

Rather, it's weird that our name wasn't well-known until now.

“Although only the names of Kazuma-dono and Dustiness-kyo could be determined, could it be that the person over there is the rumored great magician that uses explosion magic? Despite having played an amazingly active role in the incident, for some reason, her name is still unknown. As a result, it is rumored that she is a humble and mysterious person that refuses to stand in the spotlight...”

Hearing what the guard said, Megumin's face turned slightly red, and her jaw dropped a teensy bit. However, in order to preserve her image as a 'discreet magician' she answered in a soft voice.

“...Hm, is there a rumor like that? Well, I suppose it is true to say that I am humble, after all, I give all the money we earn from our adventures to Kazuma.”

“Hey, I just want to say that my name isn't there either. My name isn't there despite how worldly famous I am.”

There were probably other reasons that Megumin's name didn't spread, but I suppose that, she was ecstatic that she was called 'humble and mysterious. Well, it seems that her mind had already soared off in that direction.

Seeing Megumin's attitude, the guard's eyes began to glimmer as though he was deeply moved.

"A-, Amazing, are you saying that you have no interest in wealth or fame!?"

"Fu... My only desire is to reach to limits of the true essence of magic. When the leader, Kazuma, requires my power, I tell him this: 'What I desire is the minimum food and other small expenses, and also, a place where my power can be brought to proper use'...!"

"OOOOHHHH!"

This girl, when I was about to kick her out of the party, she cried and begged me, saying that 'I'm fine with just food and other small expenses, so don't forsake me!' with tears in her eyes.

It was then—

"Ahh! He actually came!"

A pained cry emerged from the doorway as the doors to the waiting room were swung open.

Standing there, was a familiar magician that wore a large hood.

It was the noble lady that was entrusted with Iris' education and protection, Rain.

"It's quite cruel of you to say 'he actually came' isn't it? I came all the way here because I was called by Iris you know? Generally speaking, wouldn't it be better to have a nice night banquet to congratulate the party that defeated yet another demon king army general?"

"Um... T-, That is..."

Rain slightly averted her gaze in an uneasy manner. It seems that she understood this as well.

However, that only lasted a fleeting moment, as she pulled Darkness by the arm and left the room. She took a few glances at me, and they began to whisper

amongst each other.

‘Dustiness-sama, didn’t you say that you would find some way to make ‘him’ reject this request!? If we leave that person in charge of Iris-sama, foreign relation problems will definitely arise...’

‘I understand. Despite my efforts, his resistance was unexpectedly strong. However, the good thing is that ‘that person’ believes that I won’t do anything more, and has lowered his guard. I’ll drug him when we arrive at the capital of the neighboring nation, so that he will be asleep for the duration of Iris’ stay there.’

‘OOOH, as expected of Dustiness-sama! If that’s the case, then I will rest assured!’

...What exactly were those guys scheming.

Rather, Darkness had been requested to restrict me by the nation itself, huh.

As for the reason I could understand their secret discussion...

“What are you doing Kazuma? Why are you staring at their faces?”

“Ah, I was just confirming the condition of the skill I learned recently.”

Yes, it was thanks to my new ‘lip-reading’ skill.

It was a skill that lets me understand their conversation just by seeing the movements of their mouths.

I originally intended to use it to eavesdrop on the people in the adventurers guild during my free time, and to be honest, there wasn’t any real meaning to this skill. However, I must say that it’s quite a good skill.

Then, from outside the waiting room came a noisy shout.

“Satou Kazuma! Is it true that Satou Kazuma has come!?”

The familiar voice was that of the lady that I have little trouble dealing with.

We immediately turned our eyes to the doorway in response. The great noble whose trademark was her white suit, and was entrusted with Iris’ protection – Claire – charged into the room.

Spotting me, Claire pulled my arm and dragged me to a corner of the room—

“—Oh, what’s up white suit. Are you also against me being a bodyguard?”

I was cautious, but Claire leaned forward and whispered to me.

“Don’t call me ‘white suit’ you imbecile. However, you came at the right time. I give you my thanks.”

.....

“You’re thanking me? Just what has come over you? What are you planning?”

Towards me, who had become even more cautious as a result of her attitude.

“I’m not planning anything. ...No, rather, it would be wrong to say that I haven’t planned anything. Oi, you, take this.”

Saying that, she handed the pendant that bore the insignia of her household to me.

This was something that Darkness always kept on herself, so it should be an important thing that was the proof of her nobility.

“...For real, what’s up with you? Despite your usual attitude, could it be that you actually long for me? Well, it’s regrettable for you, but recently I’ve had a good feeling with a certain girl. As a forthcoming and honest man, I cannot allow myself to step any further. Sorry about this, but please give up.”

“You’re truly idiotic, why would I do that! Rather, I haven’t even said anything yet, so why are you already turning me down!”

Claire who rose her voice in exasperation, took notice of her surroundings, and quickly calmed down.

“It’s not like that. Just this time, I feel like you and I can work together. This meeting will have a lot of political implications, but... In the first place, before all of this happened, I was already against Iris-sama’s marriage.”

“Alright, fill me in on the details.”

Seeing that I was prepared for a serious conversation, Claire retrieved something from her pocket.

“The person Iris-sama will be meeting is the first prince of the neighboring

country. However, due to his spoiled upbringing and education, he is a truly selfish brat. He is no equal for Iris-sama, who was born with the talent for battle, and surely, his appearance is also incomparable to her adorableness and beauty. Furthermore, the neighboring country of Elroad looks down upon my nation. Should Iris-sama be wedded to him, those imbeciles will surely speak maliciously of her and look at her with contemptuous eyes... That's why I'll entrust this to you."

With a steady gaze, Claire handed a black bag to me.

"This is?"

"It is a forbidden poison that is used by nobles to bury their political enemies..."

I threw the bag away the moment I received it.

"Hey, how much money do you think I spent to get my hands on that!"

"Don't try to turn me into an assassin! I will gladly help you dissolve the marriage, but I don't plan to become a sacrificial pawn you know! You...! You're planning to kill me on a societal level along with that guy aren't you!?"

Claire lightly clicked her tongue.

"I suppose it can't be helped. Then, I have another thing to request of you besides the bodyguard mission. As long as you have the necklace that I entrusted you with a moment ago, you should be able to freely use the authority of my household, Shinfornea, to a certain extent. For this time, and this time only, you will have the backing of my household. How could I possibly hand Iris-sama to such a suspicious person? Do whatever you have to do to dissolve this engagement."

"If that's the case, I'll gladly accept. How could I stand and watch as misfortune befalls Iris? Please leave this to me. If the person in question is a cheeky, shitty brat, I'll do whatever I can to get in the way."

Hearing my immediate reply, Claire's expression shined with enthusiasm.

"I appear to have misunderstood your circumstances. Please forgive my disrespect towards you until now. I will leave Iris-sama in your hands."

“It’s nothing, rather, I have a lot of things I’m sorry about as well. It seems like your beliefs towards Iris are the real deal. Despite how I look, I’m a man that has encountered countless amount of powerful enemies. Something of this level is easy-peasy.”

At the very instant we, who had always fought over matters involving Iris, came to a mutual understanding—

Claire and I raised our right hands in unison, and firmly grasped the others’.

“In this situation, I believe that you are the person I can rely on the most. While I cannot leave this nation, I promise you that the rewards will be grand. So I will leave the rest to you.”

“I am grateful to have someone as powerful as you supporting me. As for the rewards; I suppose that when all this is smoothly done, we should come together to discuss how cute Iris was when she was kid over a glass of wine.”

“What an ambitionless man you are. When the time comes, let us talk all the way until the next morning. I will tell you all about how destructive Iris-sama was during her childhood years.”

And so, without a care for our surrounding gazes, we exchanged a smile...

“The two of you seem to be enjoying yourselves quite nicely.”

I immediately looked towards the source of the extremely lonely voice.

At the doorway was a young girl, who – as though she were afraid of strangers – shyly stuck her head out from the side, and peeked at the situation.

At the instant she, princess Iris, and I made eye contact, she bashfully said.

“It’s been a long time onii-sama. I’ve been waiting for you...!”

<TL Note: お待ちしておりました Can mean both, ‘I’ve kept you waiting’ and the current form>

Part 2

At the interior of the castle, we stood before a simple, yet sturdy-looking horse-drawn carriage.

No, this isn't a horse-drawn carriage.

There was nothing where the wheels should be, and the one pulling on it weren't horses.

"Lizard Runners! Kazuma, these are Lizard Runners you know!? Lizard Runners!"

Megumin excitedly pulled on my sleeve.

Yes, the transportation device that looked like a horse-drawn carriage was actually connected to two lizards.

The monsters that looked like the frill-necked lizards that we had hunted as part of a request in the past, looked towards here and began to cry."

"Kyuukyuukyuu!-!"

Hearing the cute shout that didn't suit its appearance, Aqua and Megumin's eyes began to shine.

"Hm, will we be using the imperial carriage? I heard that this meeting was supposed to be a secret though..."

Darkness, who had seen the carriage, voiced her question.

"Using a normal carriage would take too much time. Using a normal, horse drawn carriage would take ten days of travel to arrive at the capital. However, using this carriage that was specifically designed for royalty, the travel time can be greatly shortened."

Saying that in a manner that made it feel like she was grumbling about something, Claire raised a hand towards the imperial carriage.

Then, the carriage smoothly rose off the ground. It was now hovering about ten centimeters off the ground.

I see, the reason it didn't have wheels like a typical horse-drawn carriage was because of this feature.

If the carriage was like this, then there won't be any drag from the cart as the lizard runners pulled on it. It seems very fast indeed.

"I don't know what I might do if I couldn't see Iris-sama for over ten days. A normal carriage would take over twenty days here and back. How could I possibly endure that?"

"If that's the case why don't you just come with us?"

Hearing my suggestion, Claire showed a frustrated expression, and said.

"Didn't I already tell you that this journey was a secret? If there are too many followers, then people will assume that the entourage involves a noble from somewhere. For this reason, the carriage has also been redesigned for a simple appearance. More importantly, as an authoritative figure of this nation, I have duties I need to fulfill. In the end, the affairs of the nation cannot be set aside for any more than a few days you see?"

With this girl as an authoritative figure, I couldn't help but be worried about the future of the nation.

Then, Darkness got herself to the driver's seat, and grasped the reins of the lizard runners.

To think that Darkness would be the driver, what a surprise.

Well, I suppose that given that she was a noble, she should at least know how to ride a horse.

The creatures that she was controlling weren't horses, but Darkness had said that there wouldn't be any problems.

However, leaving this to this clumsy person, I couldn't help but feel a bit uneasy...

Anyway, it seems like we were the only bodyguards assigned to Iris.

Well, if the strict and formal people followed along, then they would probably get angry with the way I treated Iris. So this was a blessing in some sense.

It also seemed like that had prepared to travel before we arrived.

Iris – who seemed like she couldn't wait any longer – was equipped with the armor of the royal family and a dazzling sword. She quickly climbed onto the carriage.

“Please sit here onii-sama! Since the seat beside me will be open, we can play games like before while we travel!”

“Oh? You're quite an onii-chan's girl aren't you Iris. Alrighty, onii-chan will do his best ok!”

Iris, who had climbed into the carriage, signaled to the seat beside her.

Perhaps she was feeling fairly lonely after being separated from me for a long time.

Somehow, I get the feeling that we were closer than when we last saw each other.

Then, Megumin who climbed into the carriage next, moved her face closer to Iris' and said.

“Oi! How gutsy of you to take the best seat despite being a mere underling! Now, hand over the seat behind the driver that has the best view to me, or I won't invite you to go play again!”

“H-, How unfair of you! This and that are different problems! Besides, today, I'm not your underling, but a princess! An authority! I will not hand over the seat behind the driver. If you wouldn't have it any other way, then I'm up for a fight as well!”

The two of them shouldn't have met in a long time, yet they immediately started fighting with each other. As though this was a normal occurrence, Claire and Rain held their heads in their hands.



“...Hey Darkness, did you go meet Iris in secret? I can’t help but get the feeling

that Iris and Megumin seem to get along better than before.”

“N-, No, nothing like that has happened... More importantly, I’m a bit curious about why Megumin called Iris-sama an ‘underling’.”

As we were forming our suspicions, the seats seemed to have been decided.

“Then both Iris and I will sit behind the rider’s seat.”

“Alright, I wouldn’t lose to you. The loser of this game will have to listen to the order of the winner!”

Eh?

“Hey, weren’t you guys competing for the right to sit beside me? How did it turn out like this?”

By the way, the carriage had four seats.

There were two rows of two seats.

“Then I’ll sit beside Darkness ok? I want to sit in the front to see the scenery while we’re travelling after all.”

Aqua, who wanted to see the scenic views during our trip, chose to sit in the front. Thus, I was the last one out.

Ehh? Isn’t this a little strange?

What happened to the gorgeous trip there?

In a slightly dissatisfied manner, I boarded the back of the carriage. Claire hurriedly rushed to Iris.

“Iris-sama, did you forget anything? Did you bring your handkerchief? What about extra change to use in times of need? In emergency situations, don’t hesitate to use the scrolls and magic items I gave you alright? If you’re feeling lonely, please don’t cry...”

“Claire, I’m not a child anymore, so I’ll be fine. Besides, if you don’t let go, we won’t be able to leave, so...”

Claire, who latched onto Iris, was promptly pulled away by Rain.

“Alright then Iris-sama, please don’t push yourself, and stay safe. Have a nice

trip!”

“Satou Kazuma, I’ll leave Iris-sama in your care! If anyone dares to show disrespect to Iris-sama, you may go as far as to slash them! ...Iris-samaaaaaaa!”

As the two of them saw us off—

“Well then, I’ll be going!”

Iris waved her hand, and Darkness swung the reins of the runners, who began to run—

Part 3

About half of this request was carefree, leisurely travel on a carriage.

Or at least, that's what I thought.

"WAAAAAAH Kazuma-san! Kazuma-san!! I want you to switch seats with me! This is too scary!"

"Oi, isn't this too fast! If an accident happens at this speed, we'll die instantly!"

As Aqua cried out in fear of the excessive speed of the lizard runners, I shouted to the front.

The carriage, which floated frictionlessly above the ground, was pulled forward by the lizard runners at a frightening speed.

"It's alright Kazuma! The carriage used by royalty all have a powerful barrier cast upon them. In the case of an accident, the people sitting at the driver's seat will be the only ones to go 'splat'. HAHAAHA, wonderful! These lizard runners are truly wonderful! Good, let's go even faster!"

"Stop! Hey, let me get back in the carriage!"

In response to Darkness' strangely enthusiastic reply, Aqua began to cry and shout. As this was all happening, Iris and Megumin gleefully frolicked like children.

"Kazuma Kazuma, there were mandrake-like creatures copulating just now!"

"W-, Where is it!? I want to see the mandrake as well!"

Did they not play their game because there were a lot of strange views in our surroundings, or is it because it's the first time they've been on a trip like this?

The two children with shining eyes plastered themselves against the window as though they were competing over the right to use it.

"What you want to see aren't the mandrakes but the copulation right? Not only do we have a noble lady who tried to amuse themselves with Kazuma, but we also have a member of royalty who's a closet pervert. Will this country really be fine?"

“There aren’t any closet perverts in royalty! ...Who is the noble lady who tried to amuse themselves with onii-sama? ...Could it be—”

Having been stared at by two high-spirited children for a while now, Darkness blushed all the way up to her ears.

“Hey, what are we going to do if we crash into a monster at this speed!? If a precious existence like myself goes ‘splat’ in a place like this, this world is going to end! Hey Darkness, are you listening!?”

“It’s alright Aqua. This carriage is outfitted with magic tools that repel monsters, so it’s unlikely for monster to suddenly come out and crash into us. Yes, as long as our luck isn’t bad, we’ll be fine...”

“Hey Kazuma, Darkness just raised a flag! I’m begging you, please just let me into the carriage!”

—It would be correct to say that we were far too boisterous for anyone to think that we were a royal entourage. Was this going to continue every day?

Rather, I just noticed. Do we really count as bodyguards?

I was feeling a teensy bit worried about this, but my worries were quickly swept away in the next moment

“Exterion!”

At the same time Iris shouted, a shining slash of light came forth from her sword.

As if it were the special move of a hero in manga or games, the giant cow-type monster that blocked the way in front of us was cleanly sliced into two.

It might be due to the flag that Darkness’ raised, but a large amount of monsters had clogged the road.

Since we couldn’t charge right into them, we stopped and got off the carriage in order to clear a path. It was a good thing to touch the ground again, but...

I signaled to Darkness who was beside me.

“Hey, why is Iris that strong? Rather, are we even needed?”

“Iris-sama is a member of royalty you know? Since a long time ago, royalty and powerful nobles have been inheriting the blood of heroes, and as a result, their latent potential skyrockets with each generation. On top of that, they receive the highest quality education in a variety of fields. Adding on to that, they use the highest quality food ingredients without reserve in order to raise their level, and they use weapons inherited from the heroes to fight. Do you know that his majesty and the first prince are currently fighting at the frontlines?”

How would I know? Rather, just send the royalty to go defeat the demon king already.

Well, I thought it was a bit strange that we were the only bodyguards.

Then, with a smile on her face, Iris ran up to me – who had been rendered speechless by her strength – whilst hugging her sword across her chest.

“How did I do onii-sama!? I worked hard!”

Seeing Iris, who wanted to be praised, I decided that none of that mattered.

“As expected of my little sister. It’s not quite at the level of me, who had laid a lot of demon king army generals to rest, but since you’re so strong, I’ll give you a passing grade. Keep at it!”

“I don’t know where onii-sama’s confidence come from, but please leave the vanguard to me! Please look closely as I sweep away the monsters using this divine instrument that has been passed on from my ancestors!”

Did this girl just say ‘divine instrument’?

“Hey, what is that sword? It looks really expensive, and it’s shining with light and stuff.”

“Are you talking about this? This is a national treasure named Calibur, and apparently, it’s a divine instrument that can protect the bearer from all abnormal effects and curses you know? The sheath was really pretty, so begged my father to give it to me.”

I, uh, well, know about this ‘Calibur’.

If I remember correctly, Megumin wrote something like that on my body during the time that I was a corpse.

Rather, isn't this the famous holy sword that everyone back on earth knows about?

More importantly, it's being carried by the princess, and not some hero fighting on the frontlines?

For some reason, Megumin, who had her moment to shine taken away from her was in a good mood. She said to Iris, who smiled ecstatically.

"Although you are still my underling, this is what I would expect from my left-hand man. If you see a monster, just slash the same way you did just now."

"Yes, please leave this to me!"

Isn't this wrong?

It's not 'please leave this to me!'. Since we're her bodyguards, we shouldn't be telling her to go and slash them up.

"Hey Megumin, what do you mean by 'underling' and 'left-hand man'? Did you do something weird without me noticing? I can't help but get a bad feeling about this. The only way for you to communicate with Iris should be through mail right?"

"How disrespectful of you to call this 'something weird'. We only perform acts of justice. Also, right now, we're only at the level when my left and right hands have found a hideout, and are starting to expand. Once we become an enormous organization, I will invite you to be my comrade in arms."

In other words, she made a secret base with some friends to play in, right?

No matter when it is, this girl seems like a child doesn't she?

Even though she occasionally does things that makes my heart go 'doki-doki' when we're alone...

Part 4

On the first day of travel to the neighboring country.

To be honest, I didn't think Iris was strong to this extent.

Since the sky was getting dark, we decided to stop for the day and start camping preparations. As we were getting off the carriage—

“As expected of Iris-sama. I didn't think that you were this strong already. You must have worked hard, haven't you?”

Darkness showed a warm and gentle smile towards Iris, who had cleared out all the monsters we encountered on the way thus far. She looked as though she was a happy sister witnessing her little sister's growth.

Yes, despite having received this bodyguard request, we haven't had even a single moment to shine.

Well, not like it's a bad thing to lay back and relax.

Well, it's not a bad thing, but I can't help but feel my pride as a brother slowly slipping away...

Iris, who was praised by Darkness, squinted her eyes in a bout of nostalgia.

“Speaking of which, you used to train me, didn't you Lalatina? It's because of that that I am able to be this strong right now. Thank you, Lalatina.”

“Fufu, I am not worthy of such praise.”

Faced with Iris' shy attitude, Darkness showed the etiquette of a vassal, and revealed a gentle smile.

.....

“But you, didn't you say that the house Dustiness was one of the families that acted as a guardian for royalty? Rather than protecting, today, you were the one being protected, and you didn't really do anything either.”

“!?”

While I didn't mean anything special when I said that, Darkness' expression

froze up.

“W-W-, What are you saying? I just felt that monsters of that level were good combat practice for Iris ok...!?”

Seeing Darkness’ flustered state, Iris hurriedly moved to interject.

“Onii-sama, Lalatina acts as the guardian of royalty at the crucial times. She is the armor and shield of my nation. There’s no need for her to act for such minor incidents. She will definitely protect me if I ever get into a pinch!”

“Iris-sama...!”

Darkness was moved to the point where she moved to hug Iris, who rubbed her head to comfort her.

Although Darkness seemed like an elder sister who was proud of her sibling’s growth, right now, I wasn’t sure who was the elder sister, and who was the little sister.

Leaving the troublesome-as-usual Darkness to her devices, I started on our camping preparations.

Now that I think about it, this is the first time I’ve went camping for real. I usually never go anywhere far after all.

Although there weren’t any good aspects of me as a bodyguard, in order to take back my pride as a brother, I should lead the tent setup and food preparations.

As I was getting excited for camping, Darkness, who was now in a somewhat good mood, took out a magic tool.

“Let’s prepare our lodgings for tonight. Iris-sama, please step aside.”

Saying that, she opened some kind of cube-shaped thing, and threw it towards some empty space.

Then, it released a flash of light, and in the open space was now a small, noble mansion.

“...What is this.”

“What do you mean by what is this? Could you have possibly thought that the

princess of the nation would go sleep in a tent? This is one of the highest-grade magic tools of the nation, which has a monster repelling barrier, and is quite convenient to carry around...”

“That’s fine already! Rather, are we really needed!?”

While I threw a straight-man retort at Darkness without thinking, this was without a doubt better than living outdoors in a tent.

Entering the small mansion that resulted from the thorough preparations for this trip, we dropped our luggages and began to rest.

—As my last stand, I announced that I would do the cooking for today, since I had the cooking skill.

The rest of them were currently exploring the interior of the magic mansion, which rooms we had already distributed amongst ourselves.

Since Iris was a princess, she was probably already tired of the high-class cuisine that she eats on a daily basis.

If that was the case, it would probably be good to cook up something that she doesn’t normally get to eat.

As I was searching for ingredients, I confirmed the condition of the kitchen.

Although this mansion didn’t have any pipes, and was constructed on an open ground, for some reason, when I turned the faucet, water came flushing out. I couldn’t help but feel slightly enraged by this unreasonable development.

“Onii-sama, is there anything I can help you with?”

A voice suddenly came from behind me.

When I turned to look, Iris’ head popped out of the side of the doorway of the kitchen, as if she was peeping.

“How could I let the princess-sama help with the cooking? This is a chance to display my skills, so just wait obediently for food to be served.”

“I can still help even if I’m a princess! Rather, no matter how much I begged the chefs at the castle, they won’t allow me to help them with the food. They

kept saying that ‘this is something for subordinates to do’...”

Seeing Iris’ despondent state, I couldn’t help but feel a bit guilty.

Well, it’s a given that a sheltered princess-sama like herself would never get the chance to cook.

...Then it’s settled.

“Well then why don’t you help me out a little bit? Just a warning, cooking isn’t as easy as it looks, alright? Listen to my instructions carefully, and take care not to hurt yourself alright?”

“Yes, I understand onii-sama!”



Seeing Iris' shining expression, I was overcome with a sense of warmth. I took

out the ingredients from the magic fridge, and began to think of what simple dishes that I could let Iris work on.

A simple dish that Iris normally doesn't get to eat, and something that even I could make without any trouble.

"Now then, we're making fried rice and dumplings today.

"Yes-! ...cha-han and gyoza? What kind of dish is it?"

<TL Note: Cha-han is fried rice, while gyoza is a type of crescent shape, pan-fried dumplings. Similar to 'Chirimendonya', Iris is simply repeating what Kazuma said, and has no idea what they are, so I left it as romaji>

First, I retrieved the cabbage from the fridge.

"Fried rice is fried rice. It's an extremely popular dish that no one in the world dislikes, but since you and Darkness have been sheltered, you probably don't know about it."

"Is it that popular of a dish? It's a shame that I don't know about it. Please teach me!"

As I was bathed in Iris' gaze of utmost respect, I paid extra care to not show her the smug grin that was forming on my lips. Then, I put the cabbage on the cutting board.

"First, we will make the filling for the dumplings! The ingredients for that are cabbage, garlic, and minced meat... OWah—!"

"Ahh-, the cabbage!"

Perhaps it had been playing dead until now, but in the instant that I was about to lay down the knife, the cabbage flew away and darted out the window.

In order to prevent the smoke from gathering in the room, I had opened the window, but it had come back to haunt me.

"...Alright Iris, cooking is an art where a moment of negligence will prove to be fatal. You have to pay extra attention to that alright?"

"Onii-sama, confirming whether or not the ingredients are still alive is the basics upon basics of cooking. Even though I don't know much about the world, I

at least know that.

—That night.

“Kazuma, what kind of dish is this? This is the first time I’ve seen this.”

Seeing the food on the table, Darkness inquired with me out of curiosity.

We had fought a fierce battle against the second cabbage. At another point, Iris had been ambushed by the onion that was one of the ingredients for the fried rice, her eyes had been burned to tears. In the end, we managed to make the fried rice and dumplings, along with an egg soup.

“Lalatina, this is an extremely popular dish that not a single person despises, call cha-han. I actually helped make this!”

“Iris-sama did!? Well then, it seems like you worked hard. I will look forward to it.”

Seeing Iris stick out her chest in pride, Darkness couldn’t help but show a smile.

I quickly fed the food into my mouth. As I was relishing in the satisfaction, Iris and Darkness stared at the dish with troubled expressions.

“Lalatina, this is definitely an extremely popular dish. Despite this ‘cha-han’ dish only being stir-fried, it still has a very rich taste.”

“There aren’t any high-class ingredients here are there? Why is such a quality dish not served to the likes of nobles? It’s quite strange isn’t it...”

I’m sure that if dumplings and fried rice were served at the night banquets of royalty and nobles, many tables would be flipped.

“Hey Kazuma, leave tomorrow’s food to the great Aqua. I will allow the two of them to eat the tastiest dishes.”

“If that’s the case, leave dinner of the day after to me. I will make the dishes that I ate often back at the Village of Crimson Magic.”

Megumin aside, it was rare for Aqua, who usually refuses to cook, to say such

things.

But well, the trip must go on I suppose.

If they were willing to help out then I have nothing but gratitude.

“Oi Kazuma, this dessert called ‘potato chips’ are quite good.”

I tried to hold back a smile as the two ojou-sama glanced with shining eyes at the junk food before them while thinking about tomorrow’s plans.

Part 5

“Now onii-sama, let us cook today as well!”

The night of the next day.

Besides Megumin releasing her explosion magic after her competitive spirit was riled up when she saw Iris routing all the monsters on the road, everything went just fine, but...

“You’re quite motivated aren’t you Iris? I see that you have a bright future ahead of you, so today, I’ll teach you my specialty!”

“Really!? Thank you very much, I will try my best!”

We were the only ones in the kitchen tonight however, Aqua was also there.

At the very least, I was out of this pinch for now.

Megumin aside, Aqua seemed to be planning to teach the sheltered princess-sama and Darkness some rather pointless things.

By the way, Darkness was currently accompanying Megumin, who couldn’t move as a result of exhausting her magic power.

Aqua looked through the fridge, and took out of a couple of ingredients.

“Today’s dinner is Tuna-Mayo rice.”

Said Aqua. She put her hands on her hips, and showed a triumphant expression.

Has she gone mad?

Although I didn’t have the right to say anything after feeding the princess-sama fried rice, but we weren’t going to get punished after all this is over right?

“It’s another dish I haven’t heard of. The people around onii-sama are quite well-informed aren’t they!”

“This is a given for a great archpriest like myself! Just saying, this is a food that you can quickly prepare if you’re crunched for time. For an adventurer who could lose their life with a moment’s hesitation, this is a treasure alright?”

“I see, so it’s a dish eaten specifically by adventurers!”

As Aqua was telling Iris some irresponsible things, she poured the tuna and mayonnaise on the rice.

“And it’s done.”

“It’s quite simple isn’t it!?”

How many times will I have to say this? Has this girl gone mad?

Then, perhaps Aqua thought that this wasn’t good enough yet, she took something else out of the fridge...

“You won’t be full with just that, so I prepared some dried-seasoning over rice and raw-egg over rice alright?”

<TL Note: Furikake-gohan and Tamago-kake gohan, for those who are curious for a visual>

“Yes, I’m very much looking forward to this!”

Iris gazed curiously at the tuna-mayo rice, with a wide smile on her face.

—After bringing all the dishes to the table, I seated myself. The two ojousamas relished the taste of the food with immense interest, today as well.

“Lalatina, this dish was made in a mere moment. The entire creation took less than a minute.”

“Is that true Iris-sama? Oi Kazuma, why didn’t you tell me about such a convenient dish sooner? If you could make such a dish so quickly, then this dish is truly priceless.”

Everyone knows, besides you.

“It’s not just soy sauce and salt, it’s also tasty with hot sauce alright?”

Saying that, Aqua poured hot sauce all over her rice. As though she were

eating a high-class cuisine, she elegantly fed the rice into her lips.

“...Aqua, to be honest, I thought you were a useless and ignorant person, but it seems like I can’t read a book by its cover. Please forgive my shallow attitude.”

Darkness, who ate the seasoning-over-rice in the same classy manner that was becoming of nobles, lowered her head towards Aqua.

“There are a lot of things in this world that you have yet to know about. Since you and Iris are both ojou-samas, it can’t be helped. Someday, I will teach you how to eat the ice cream that is stuck on the cap of a box of ice cream, as well as a bunch of other useful, small skills alright?”

I feel that we’ll anger a lot of powerful people if we teach Iris something like that.

I wanted to retort, but seeing their gazes of respect towards Aqua, I couldn’t find it in myself to break the good mood.

Bearing a troubled expression towards the delicate situation, I ate the tuna-mayo rice. Megumin, who sat beside me, silently scoffed down the food without a single complaint or comment.

Although I was a bit worried about the food for tomorrow, we would arrive at the capital of Elroad the day after.

It’s alright, Megumin was the only one in charge of food tomorrow.

Not to mention, her cooking skills weren’t all that bad either.

Yes, it will surely be alright—

Part 6

“Iris, it ran towards your side! By careful not to let it pinch your fingers alright!?”

“I understand, please leave this to me! Ah, there another lobster between the gaps of the rocks-!

The last day on our trip to Elroad.

We discovered a river as we travelled along the road, and, following Megumin’s instruction, we took a short break.

“Megumin, this lobster is a bit small. Do we really want to eat it? Isn’t this still a baby lobster? Ah, owowow...”

Darkness who had stepped into the river, shouted as her finger was pinched.

The hint of happiness that could be felt in her voice was nothing new.

“That’s not a baby lobster. Since it doesn’t live in the wide ocean, but in a narrow river, this lobster won’t grow any bigger. Oh-, you can’t escape! With this, I’ve gotten four!”

As Megumin flipped the stones at the shallow part of the river, she caught another one in live-action.

Yes.

“Hey Kazuma, I have something I want to say...”

“Don’t say it. That girl is catching lobsters, a high-class cuisine that is suitable for a princess-sama, ‘lobster’. Got it?”

We were catching crayfish.

I was a bit suspicious when Megumin had said that this was something she often ate back at the Village of Crimson Magic.

There was no way a povertous household like hers could have made some

high-class cuisine.

“Maybe it’s because not a lot of people pass through here, but we got a big catch! Tonight’s dinner will be a feast!”

“This is the first time I’ve gathered food ingredients! So there are also ways like this to enjoy cooking!”

“M-, Megumin, can you get this thing off of me! At some point, bit on my toe...!”

Perhaps they never got the chance to play by the riverside, but the two crayfish-catching sheltered ladies seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Seeing the peaceful scene unfold, I—

“Since the royalty had put a variety of ingredients in the fridge, it would be a waste not to use them. I’ll go prepare something.”

“Don’t run away on your own. If you do, then the burden of each and every one of us increases.”

—The sun finally set. As we prepared our lodgings for tonight.

“Now Iris, pay attention alright? Allow me to show you my skill in cooking as well!”

“Yes, I’ll be in your care!”

Megumin – in high spirits – took a stand in front of the large amount of crayfish.

Perhaps Megumin wanted Iris to witness her good side. She seemed far more motivated than usual.

“Usually, you’d let the crayfish sit in water for one night to expunge the dirt, but since these crayfish were caught in a fairly clean river, there wouldn’t be any issues if we eat it as it is.”

“I will study hard!”

Megumin was taught the princess-sama the knowledge required to eat crayfish.

After this is over, I should tell Iris to not mention that we taught her how to catch and eat a crayfish after she returns to the capital.

“Now then, first, we’ll remove pungent smell of the cray... lobster. To do that, we’ll submerge it in sake, uhm, ah, this should be fine.”

Megumin took a bottle of sake out of the fridge, and poured it into the bowl.

Although I noticed that it was an expensive sake that a certain someone was looking forward to drinking, I’ll pretend I didn’t notice.

“If you leave it here like this for a while, the pungent smell will be removed and replaced with a fine aroma. Now then, during this time, we’ll prepare for the next step...”

Knowing that she had taken care of a small, little sister prior to this, it was a given that she went through the steps quite deftly.

Iris showed a gaze of respect towards Megumin.

“Ah, I did everything on my own didn’t I? As for preparations, this should be fine, then...”

Maybe Megumin was happy that Iris looked at her in that fashion. After finishing the preparations, she quickly moved on to cooking.

Starting with the crayfish soup, she then moved on make the salt-grilled crayfish, and finally, she finished with a dish of stir-fried shellfish in chili-sauce.

Megumin, who displayed an unexpected amount of prowess when it came to household tasks, breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

“Kazuma has been on cooking duty all the time recently you see? Occasionally, I want everyone to eat the food I cooked myself. Alright Iris, help divide the dishes ok?”

“Ah, I understand! Sorry, I was stared absentmindedly and...”

“Is that so? Since you were looking at your leader’s amazing prowess, I guess it can’t be helped! Now now, I’ll divide the dishes, so Iris, go wash your hands.”

Towards Megumin, who seemed rather lax, I voiced my inquiry.

“Hey, what do you mean by ‘leader’?”

“...Nothing at all.”

“—Tasty. The fresh flavor of the lobster we caught seeped into the soup, so it has a rich taste. On top of that, the remaining earthly taste in the lobster is a good match for the salt-grill, so it doesn’t make me feel unpleasant at all. But ultimately, this...!”

As Darkness described the food like a narrator of a cooking show, she fed the crayfish dishes into her mouth.

Although she was praising this like a gourmet connoisseur, I wanted to tell her that this wasn’t a lobster, but a crayfish, and that it was something that you could find anywhere.

Looking at Iris, she too was enjoying the food to the fullest extent. Perhaps she felt that catching the ingredients herself was a refreshing experience in itself.

Megumin on the other hand, had said that she had caught too many ingredients, and had gone to feed the lizard runners.

...Which means that now the chance to do something about this.

“Hey Kazuma, I want to eat some toad today, so I’ll go and fry some toad from the fridge. You can have my share.”

“My late grandfather died as he was inspecting the fields of the farm, when he was attacked by a large mob of crayfish. After that, I decided that I would no longer eat shellfish. So that’s why you can have my share, Aqua.”

.....

“Do you think you can deceive the eyes of a god? I know that when you were sent to the hospital after almost getting run over by the tractor, your grandfather jumped from his seat and rushed there you know? Also, didn’t you eat those snow crimson crabs a while back!?”

“Like you’re one to talk! What do you mean by ‘I want to eat some toad’? After being eaten by toads so many times, how could you possibly be enthusiastic about eating it!?”

Suddenly, we, who grabbed onto each other as we fought over who would

take the food, felt an eerie presence from behind us.

There stood Megumin, who should've have gone to feed the lizard runners.

"Oi, if you have complaints about the secret dish of my clan, why don't we hear it?"

"We were just messing around. Of course we'll eat it."

"Ah, we were just a bit too merry about this. This shrimp looks pretty tasty, so let me try it."

As we steeled our resolve, Aqua and I picked up a shellfish to eat.

Well, this isn't a crayfish, but a lobster.

<TL Note: Kazuma is trying to delude himself>

I've already eaten something like toad when I came to this world, so at this point, it didn't matter whether or not it was a crayfish.

Furthermore, crayfish was originally used for food purposes anyway...

"Hm, this is actually not bad. Hey Kazuma, I can eat your portion as well if you don't mind. For this trip, I even prepared a bottle of expensive sake. I was looking for something to accompany it anyway, so you can leave your portion to me.

.....

Seeing Aqua happily eat the crayfish, and leave for the fridge, I put the crayfish in my mouth without hesitation.

"...Oho, this is pretty tasty. The shell has been grilled quite nicely as well, and the crayfish broth has seeped into the soup make it amazingly tasty. As expected of a secret recipe, sorry about my lack of respect for cray... lobster dishes."

"It was just a joke when I said 'secret recipe'. Well, above all, I'm glad that you're happy with it."

...As I was left with nothing but regret for my praise, I could hear Aqua crying from the kitchen.

Part 7

Later that night.

Maybe it was due to the unfamiliar pillow, but I couldn't fall asleep for some reason.

I slept like a rock the last two days because I spent the whole travel worried about the lizard runners, but by the third day, it seems like my body had gotten used to it.

I got up from the bed, and went to the kitchen to get some water.

“—‘Freeze’”

As I had my night vision ability, I didn't bother to light the lamps on my way to the kitchen. I then cooled the water that came out of the faucet.

As I released a relaxed sigh after drinking the water, I felt the presence of someone behind me, and turn my head around.

I thought the only person who could come all the way here without using a light was Aqua, who had cried the entire night after discovering that her sake was used for the dish, but...

“Is that you, onii-sama?”

I was wrong.

In the darkness of the doorway to the kitchen, which was illuminated only by faint amount of starlight that passed through the window, stood Iris.

“Ahh, it's me, your onii-sama. I couldn't fall asleep, so I came to get some water.”

Hearing my voice, Iris lightly exhaled in relief.

“Uhm, I went to the bathroom, but since its dark, could you bring me to my room?”

Iris stared at where my face was in the darkness, and shyly stretched her hand.

Although I thought that it would be fine to just light a lamp, but, from a young age, she had never said anything selfish, and was a child that was attentive to her surroundings.

Surely, she didn't want to wake anyone up by lighting a lamp.

"Alright, leave it to me. Onii-sama will bring you to your room. If you're scared of sleeping alone, I can sleep with you as well."

"I'll be fine."

.....

—Holding Iris' small hand, I led her down the dark corridor.

Not wanting to wake anyone up, Iris walked with soft steps.

As we tread lightly through the silence of everyone's sleep, I couldn't help but get the feeling that we were doing something we shouldn't.

Then, the grip of hand that held onto mine tightened.

Looking at Iris, I felt that she was thinking what I was thinking. Her expression was akin to when we went to the kitchen together to steal food – a happy smile that would be seen during the middle of our mischievous pranks.

"At times like this, I would think back to when I went to onii-sama's room late at night to play around and listen to your stories."

"You're talking about the time where you came to play without Claire's approval? Thanks to you, Claire was super angry at me the next day you know? Even though it's not like I brought you outside to play."

During my stay at the castle, Iris would occasionally sneak to my room without Claire's knowledge to come and play.

The castle would enter a state of commotion every time she came. It might even be the reason that I was forbidden from entering the capital.

As I was thinking that, Iris showed a smile and said.

“But every time I came to play, Onii-sama would patiently tell your stories... I still remember you know? The story where, in onii-sama’s country, a kind, single person that fought against a ‘present of despair’, which was cross-bearing demon called ‘Santa Claus’.”

My little sister is so clever isn’t she?

I was partially joking when I told her that, but to think that she thoroughly remembered all of it.

“I still remember you know? That onii-sama earned the title of ‘the god of net games’ after battling for multiple nights.”

My little sister is so honest isn’t she?

To think she would believe and respect such a NEET sounding story.

... I couldn’t help but feel super sorry for what I’ve done.

Seeing my speechlessness, Iris seemed to have a misunderstanding, and she uneasily asked.

“Sorry, did what I say remind onii-sama of your home country?”

No.

I was deeply reflecting on my sins.

Though it was a given that I couldn’t say that. I showed a smile to Iris—

“Nope, I was just thinking that I was really happy everyday back then, and was feeling a bit nostalgic.”

Despite knowing that she wouldn’t be able to see it, since she didn’t have the night vision ability.

However, as if feeling my smile in the darkness, Iris seemed to be slightly relieved.

“It’s good if that’s the case... Uhm”

Having arrived at to her room at some point, we let go of each other’s hand.

As Iris opened to door to her room, she turned around to face me.

“Please continue to stay in my nation. After all, I will try my best to make it one that onii-sama will forever want to live in.”

As if she was worried that I would go to a faraway place for some reason, she showed a somewhat lonely smile.

Part 8

The next morning.

Since we would arrive at Elroad sometime today, Aqua was in a high spirits. What Iris said last night weighed on my mind, and I asked Darkness, who sat beside me on the rider's seat.

"Hey Darkness, this trip is just to meet the little brat that Iris is engaged to right? Then it wouldn't be a problem to go back immediately after seeing him right?"

Darkness look at me dumbfoundedly, and stole a glance at Aqua and Megumin, who were keeping Iris occupied.

"There's no way we've come to just see them you know? If that's the case, there wouldn't be a need to come here in secret, and there's no point in doing such a thing when the war against the demon king army is intensifying. I'll be honest with you. This visit is to ask for reinforcements from the neighboring country."

To ask for reinforcements.

"No, a request like that has been sent to all the nations a long time ago. Since my nation is the only one that borders the demon king army's territory, if we were to be defeated, then the line of defense would be broken, and the weaker nations would immediately be overrun. Because of that, the surrounding countries regularly send elite troops as reinforcements."

Oh?

"However, the nation of Elroad is the only exception. Since it was a nation that was established on casinos, their military forces are weak. As a result, instead of reinforcements, they send us financial support. The majority of our security expenses are covered by this country."

"I see. But how is that related to what we're doing now?"

Hearing my question, Darkness said.

“Didn’t I tell you that the war with the demon king army has been intensifying? But there’s another reason behind this truth, Kazuma, and that is because we’ve defeated too many demon king army generals.”

.....

“Eh, you’re saying that they’re trying to get revenge for defeating their generals?”

“No, the demon king army has become flustered, so to speak. After all, the demon king army generals that have been undefeated until now are being slain one after another. To add onto that, we are not only increasing our defenses to defend against them, we are also starting to counterattack. However, since Elroad is currently undergoing financial difficulties, rather than providing funds for attacking, they’re planning to stop the defense funding. Thus, in place of the king and the prince who are currently commanding on the front lines, Iris-sama, who is also a member of royalty, has been sent here as a representative.”

“...I see.”

I finally understand what Iris meant yesterday.

She thinks that I would run away if the war took a turn for worse. She really does understand me.

Basically – in order to get the funding – she was trying to cajole her fiancé.

Since my little sister was the cutest in the world, it should be easily done.

“My country has had good relationship with Elroad for a long time. As a militant nation that is estranged with financial matters, our relationship with the financial robust but militarily weak nation of Elroad could be said to be a give and take relationship. Regardless of Elroad’s financial struggles from now on, this visit is crucial to my nation, and might even decide the fate of the world, so don’t do anything unnecessary alright?”

Darkness stared at me as she said that.

“... I get it. It’s something for the sake of the world and its people right? I’m also an adventurer that fights against the demon king army, so at times like this, I wouldn’t do anything selfish. I know that it’s pointless for me to meddle in this

manner, so you can rest assured ok?”

Hearing what a said, Darkness showed a relieved smile.

Then, Darkness gaze almost immediately turned to that of suspicion.

“Oi, you, what’s your stare supposed to mean? Are you doubting me?”

“I can’t bring myself to believe that you would say something like ‘for the sake of the world and its people’... Well fine, once we arrive at Elroad’s castle down, we can take our time to rest. After all, there’s no need to go meet them immediately after arriving. First we’ll take a day to rest. Everything comes after that.”

As if trying to reassure me, Darkness showed a gentle smile...

.....Ah, I see.

Now that I think about it, before we left, Darkness and Rain had conspired to make me take a sleeping drug.

“Ah, Kazuma Kazuma, look! We can see Elroad!”

“Ahahahahahha! That’s it! I’ve always wanted to come here, to the great nation of casinos, Elroad!”

Things were heating up behind me.

Listening to everyone’s voices, Darkness and I exchanged dubious smiles.

Chapter 3: Punishing this Insolent Fiancé!

Part 1

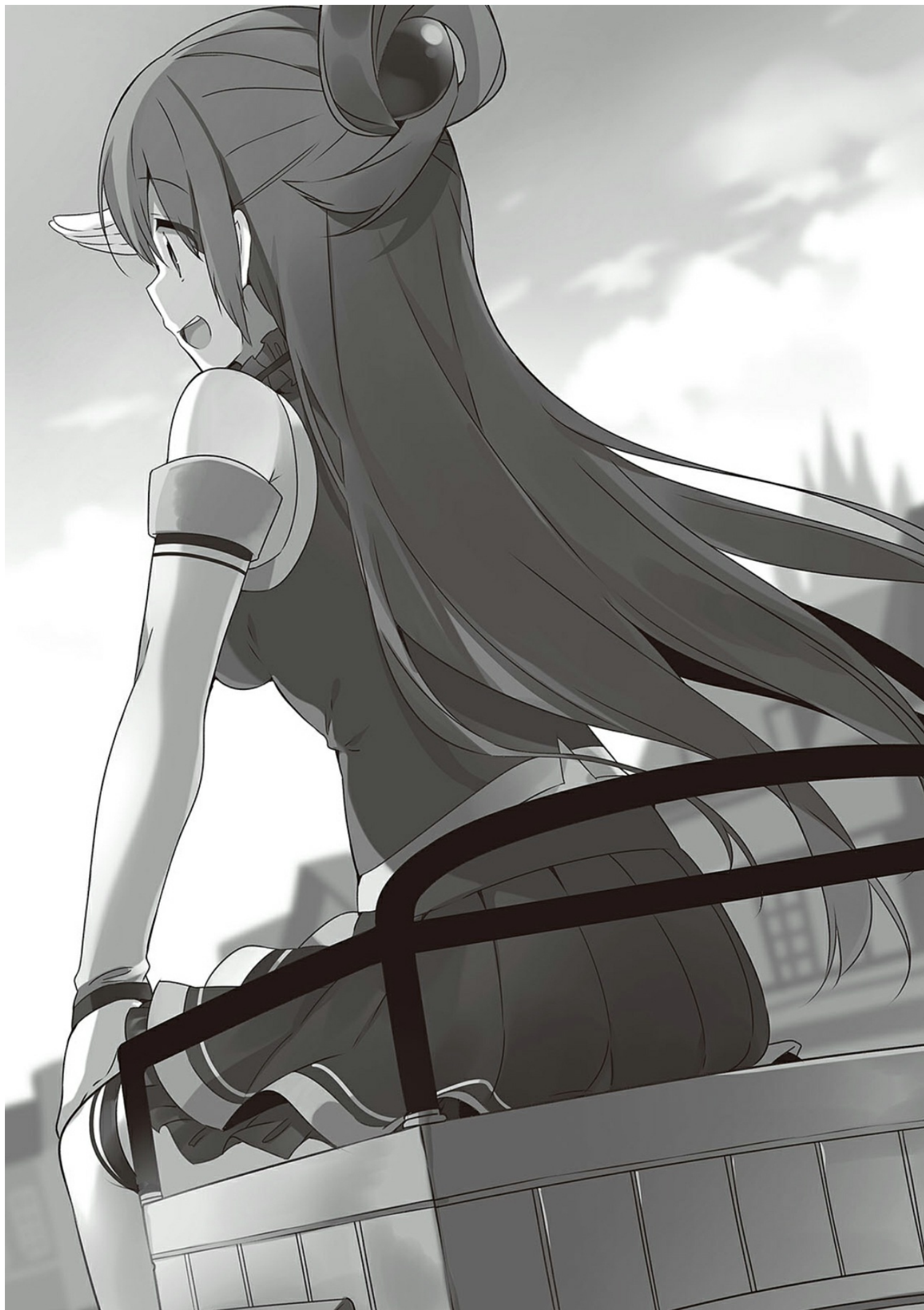
This is what this nation is called by others.

The great nation of casinos, Elroad.

Arriving at the capital of the neighboring nation of Elroad, we were overwhelmed by the bustle and activity on the streets.

“Hey Kazuma, the amount of people here are pretty much at the level of Axel during festival time! I mean, where do they get all these people from!?”

Our carriage moved along the main road at walking speed, and Aqua, who had gotten excited after seeing the amount of people, moved to the driver's seat of the carriage. She turned her eyes everywhere whilst making a big fuss, and giggled to herself as she saw the people passing by.



“Oi Aqua, we’re traveling incognito here, so could you not draw so much

attention? Don't forget what we came here for alright?"

I reminded her just in case, but Aqua was already absorbed by the stalls along the streets.

But it's not like I didn't understand how she felt.

Using Japan for comparison, I would say that this place was as busy as Shibuya's Scramble crossroad.

Compared to Earth, the population of this world was considerably lacking.

If there are still so many people here despite that, that means...

"This is an advertising strategy to make the capital appear as though it's bustling with activity. Look, you see that guy over there by the corner? I'm pretty sure he turned the corner and came back, which means he's just an actor. I'm pretty sure he's being hired to walk around pointlessly."

"As expected of your observational skills Kazuma-san. I thought this was a little weird as well, I mean, if this was real, then isn't the place where we set our base, Axel, practically the countryside?"

As Aqua and I chattered amongst ourselves, Darkness seemed to blush a little.

"Stop saying dumb things and be quiet you two. I can't bear being thought of as a country bumpkin."

Well, it can't be helped that Darkness thinks of us as some country bumpkins.

After all, the stalls on the road were lined with foods we've never seen before, and the traders and shoppers raised their voices so that they would not be drowned out by the others.

It also seems that our lodgings were prepared in advance. Our carriage stopped in front of a giant building that faced the main street.

"Now, this is the hotel that's been prepared for us. Everyone should go to your rooms and sort your luggage. Iris will meet with the prince tomorrow, so for today, we can take our time to go sightseeing and take a rest from our travels."

After leaving the carriage to one of the hotel workers, Darkness explained as such.

Whilst the rest of us were in high spirits, Iris shook her head a single time.

“I need to prepare for tomorrow’s meeting... since this is my first time meeting the prince, I’m feeling a bit nervous. Perhaps this is the reason I’m feeling stressed. I’ll be resting at the hotel, so everyone should feel free to go sightseeing.”

Saying that, she took her own luggage.

“Iris-sama, weren’t you looking forwards to coming here? Since we’re your bodyguards, leaving you behind is a bit...”

“Y-, You can’t! Please go and relax. Since we’ve come all the way to the nation of casinos, I wouldn’t be able to rest with peace in mind if I keep you holed up in the hotel!”

“Come on Darkness, Iris has said this much, so let’s just go vent our stress and relax ok?”

“u..... A, Alright...”

As Iris showed a friendly smile, Darkness, who was hesitant to leave her behind, seemed to be compelled by the hidden but powerful determination behind Iris’ gaze, and meekly nodded her head.

After arranging our luggage in our rooms—

“Casinos! Let’s hit the casinos first! After we win big, we can take the money and go on a feast! I’m sure that they’re selling super expensive saké here as well!”

“No, we should go to the weapons and armor store here first! I’m sure that we’ll find a super powerful staff that can match up to me!”

We immediately took to the streets.

“Mmpf, is it really fine for us to leave Iris-sama alone like that...”

Only Darkness seemed to feel uneasy.

To me, it seemed that Iris was eager for this meeting to be a success.

In order to prepare for tomorrow, she skipped out on playing around. She’s

probably running simulations on her own at this very moment.

Worrying too much about it would probably have the reverse effect. I'll go buy a gift for her later.

However, even if I say that...

"As usual, neither of you guys can agree on one thing. Since we came all the way here, why don't we go sightseeing first? There was a lot to see in the Village of Crimson Magic, so I'm sure that this town..."

Would have a lot of rare sights, of course.

—Just as I was about to say that.

"Oho? What beautiful adventurers. Hey, blonde-haired onee-san over there, why don't you leave that boring guy alone and come with us?"

"It's true, they're super pretty! I prefer that blue-haired onee-san!"

"As for me, it would be that pretty black-haired red-eyed girl..."

To put it shortly, they were a group of superficial-looking carefree group of three guys.

From the looks of it, they were about one or two years older than me.

Dressed in the attire that that was unique to the big city, the three of them looked toward us with grins plastered on their faces.

They physiques seemed pretty terrible, so they gave off the impression of being spoiled brats who came to the city to play around.

As for my three companions that had been called out to by those guys...

""""?""""

They looked through their surroundings, searching for girls who met the traits the guys mentioned.

...Finally, they noticed that the guys had probably been talking about themselves.

“““!?”””

The three of them began to act all flustered and suspicious.

Darkness hurriedly turned her back and played with her hair, and Megumin began to pat the dust – that had accumulated during our journey – off her robes.

And then Aqua said.

“Hey you guys over there, did you just call us pretty? Did you just call us beautiful? Say it one more time!”

.....

There were no guys in Axel that were benevolent enough to say such things to them huh.

So I suppose that they wanted people to praise their appearance once in a while huh...

Seeing how bewildered they were when they were mistaken for top-class pretty ladies, I was moved to tears.

“Eh.... You onee-sans are beautiful and uh... would you like to come with us, um...”

Said one of the three. Were they the ones that were bewildered by Aqua’s reaction instead?

Hearing that, Aqua and co. huddled together to form a ring.

And then, they began to chatter amongst themselves.

Finally, Megumin – who appeared to be the representative for the three – stepped forth.

“Basically, the three of you are saying that – ‘If we could go on a date with a super beautiful girl like you and these two beautiful girls, we’re willing to put our assets and life on the line. That said, why don’t we go on a date?’ – Is that what you wanted to say?”

“““Not to that extent.”””

The three guys immediately rebutted.

.....!

I noticed.

I've noticed.

This is the capital of the kingdom of finance, the nation of casinos.

Of course, I want to go here and there to relieve my stress.

But what if these three problem children were following me around?

Think Satou Kazuma, think. There's no way that these three wouldn't cause trouble.

And at the end of it all, the burden of dealing with it will be placed onto me.

However, what if I wasn't there when they caused the problems, but rather, these three guys?

.....

"Hey... Could it be that we've tried to hit on a weird bunch?"

"Oi... doesn't this seem a bit bad? We came all the way here to go sightseeing, but aren't we spreading our wings a bit too far with this?"

"N-, No, but although they a bit weird, they're THAT pretty you know?"

As the three guys began to chatter amongst themselves, Aqua and co. walked up to me.

Their prideful triumphant expressions made me feel a tad uncomfortable.

"Hey Kazuma, what are you going to do? I'm feeling quite troubled by this you know? I was called a pretty lady, and they even asked us out for dates as well. Although Kazuma, who was called 'boring' by the three of them is probably already used to it, right? Well, I hope that you'll come to realize that it's truly a blessing that you're able to be in a party with pretty ladies such as ourselves, because if you don't, your important party members might just go along with these guys you know?"

"Please go ahead."

""""""Eh""""""

Hearing me say 'go ahead', not only Aqua and co., but even the three boys froze in place.

"...Uhm, hey Kazuma. Just now, what..."

Insecurity could be felt behind Aqua's voice.

These people are high-level adventurers.

I don't think that their ability falls behinds that of a couple of ordinary onii-chans. Either way, I don't have the right to say anything about who these guys wanted to date.

Rather, I've already shoved them over to the three guys for today. I said happily.

"I said 'please go ahead'. I mean, it's not like I'm your mom or anything. I don't want to spend all my time babysitting you. I'd much rather take some time to relax by myself. I honestly don't think that it's a crime for me to want to do that every so often."

""""Huh-""""

Hearing my unexpected words, Aqua and co. released strange voices.

"...Oi, that guy just said 'babysitting' didn't he?"

Hearing that, one of the guys murmured to himself.

And, Megumin, in a somewhat panicked manner—

"Wait Kazuma, what are you saying all of a sudden! Listen closely alright? I will... No, we will go and play around with those people. Are you not going to feel jealous or depressed...?"

"Not in the slightest."

"He said it like it was nothing!"

Megumin seemed to be shocked. Well, we've had a good atmosphere here and there, but it's not like we're dating each other or anything.

Either way, I didn't have the right to say anything about it since all that ever comes out of my mouth is Iris and Iris.

Then, Darkness firmly put her hand on Megumin's shoulder.

"Wait a moment Megumin. You should know that this man is not the honest-type, right? Fufu, yes, he's definitely a classic tsundere."

She then showed a bargaining smile in my direction.

"Hey Kazuma, why don't you be a bit more honest in situations like this? You'll be going with a pretty lady like me who'll be hit on like this all the time you know? Would you like to lock arms with me? You might even get a chance to 'accidentally' nudge my chest..."

"I'll pass. I mean, you're entire body is just muscle and your chest is probably hard as well."

"Ehh-!?"

Ignoring Darkness, who seemed to have received a terrible shock, the guys discussed amongst themselves.

"Oi, what do you guys think? That man is a terrible person, but I can't help but get a bad feeling about this."

"Let's stop. Since we came all the way here to sightsee, I'd rather we not do anything weird..."

"Y-, You're right. 'Let sleeping dogs lie'... there's such a saying, so let's give up... ah, even though they're so pretty, what a waste.... U-, Uhm! We have somewhere we need to..."

Before the three of them could escape, I vigorously pulled them back.

"You said that you wanted to go on a date with my companions right?"

Hearing what I said, one of the men's faces twitched, and moved his body to fling my hand aside...

...But It didn't work.

"Huh? Ah-... O-, Owowow...! Hey, I'm sorry, I was lying. It was my bad for trying to hit on your company! It was my bad for saying that you were a boring man! We'll be going so-!"

I was an adventurer with a considerable level.

Since my status had risen, my strength won't lose to that of a normal person.

"No no, it's fine, it's all fine. My three acquaintances are quite beautiful right? Mhm, mhm, I understand, I really do."

"H-, Huh..."

The three of them gazed at me as though I was some shady, strange man, and were unable to hide their unease.

Speaking in low voice, I continued.

"You see that blonde-haired armored onee-chan? She's even more amazing without her armor you know? I mean, just what are those hips man!"

Hearing what I said, the guys gulped on their saliva.

Towards the three, I continued.

"The blue-haired onee-chan over there really likes saké you know? If you say that you'll buy her saké, she'll be really happy."

And then, I looked them straight in the eye, and said.

"As for the black-haired girl... Uhm, you know, she raises a cat, so she probably likes cute things. She might be happy if you bring her somewhere with cute animals to see."

The three of them nodded their heads in unison.

""""Th-, Then, we will take you up on your kind offer.....""""

Turning away from the three of them, who began to laugh amongst themselves, and whose attitudes softened tremendously, I waved 'bye' to Aqua and co.

"Well then you guys, see ya later. Go all out today and have some fun and vent your stress, ok? That said, don't cause any trouble for me starting tomorrow alright? After all, you can do whatever you want for today."

""""Eh-""""

Hearing what I said, the men's unease returned.

Aqua and co. turned to them and said.

“Listen up okay? I didn’t bring any spare change with me alright? However, the great Aqua-san will not take any cheap saké ok?”

In response, one of the three pounded their chest with the hand.

“P-, Please leave it to me! The three of us have a lot of money, after all, our relatives are all from upper-class society. If need be, you can leave all your expenses in this town to us!”

He said it.

I, who heard that loud and clear—

“Well then, please enjoy yourselves, you guys. I’m gonna go and relax as well, so I’ll leave them to you. Don’t try to ditch my acquaintances, or escape from any responsibilities, alright?”

Said that, I turned my back to leave...

“J-, Just how far are you going to push my expectations... The part where you don’t seem to be putting up a front, but rather, sound completely serious, is really unbearable. I can’t help but feel a chill down my spine... This is just another one of his tricks right? Just a facade, right? ...Oi, you guys, just a warning, but don’t try to do anything strange to us. Otherwise, who knows what that man who’s called ‘the brute’ in the town of beginners, Axel, is going to do you?”

“““Eh”””

Darkness said some rather disrespectful things about me from behind my back.

“That’s right. Judging by his attitude that allowed him to leave some weak and beautiful girls like us behind without hesitation, just what kind of person do you think he is? If you don’t treat us well, that guy will bare his fangs. Despite how he looks, he has the ability to infiltrate the heavy security of a noble’s mansion, and snipe a target from afar. If you make him your enemy, don’t even think about sleeping.”

“““!”””

Oi, stop.

“Hey, don’t say such terrible things about him you two! Kazuma is not that much of a demon. It’s true that he blew up the mansion of an authoritative

figure and was labeled a traitor to the nation, and it's true that he's someone whose forbidden from entering the capital due to problems he might cause, but..."

Oi Aqua, please try harder.

There's no one else to follow up on you, so please try harder!

"""" """"

The three of them who replied with silence, slowly turned their heads towards me....

"...Uhm, actually, I think we'll pass on this, I don't want to have any ties... Ahhh-!? He ran away~!"

One of the men said something to me.

""""He ran! That guy really left us behind!""""

In addition, I left Aqua and co., who shouted something at me, and dashed through the streets of Elroad!

Part 2

This was the first time I've been to a foreign country since coming to this world. Not only that, this metropolis made the town I've been in until now feel like the countryside.

I, at the kingdom of Elroad—

"This ends here! Take this!"

"You're kidding meeeeeee!"

""""""""""OOOOHHH-!""""""""""

Joining a card-game competition at the last moment, I was now steadily advancing through the ranks.

"Who the heck is that guy?"

"I haven't seen him before, but there's no way someone as skilled as him could be unknown!"

Witnessing my streak of wins from afar, the onlookers raised a stir.

"That man's fierce and relentless assault... Isn't he similar to the rumored 'Katarina the Black'?"

"What, that legend!? No, but I heard that 'Katarina the Black' is female..."

Who the heck was 'Katarina the Black'?

"Wait, look at the way that guy uses his trap card. He might be 'Kroad the Schemer'..."

"True. I can't think of another else other than 'Kroad the Schemer' that would use traps in such a way..."

Yes, but who the heck is 'Kroad the Schemer'?

This was an alternate world where famous adventurers had nicknames.

So it might not be all that strange for famous gamers to also have aliases.

Back in my world, my net-game companions also called me names like that.

Yes, 'Lucky-Bastard Kazuma-san' and 'Hyena-Master Kazuma-san' and other disgraceful names...

...As I was lost in thought, a lady came before me.

"You're my opponent? Fufu, I've never seen you before. It seems that you are good at drawing cards, but this isn't a game where you can win with luck alone you know? Yes, it is a game of wits and strategy. You might be able to beat intermediate players with pure luck, but against me – who has a nickname – you'll soon meet your end."

I won't say things like 'Isn't having a nickname too embarrassing?' and other straight-man rebuttals.

After all, I, as a gamer, haven't felt this excited in a long time.

"Your winstreak will end here, by the hand of 'Marinaise the Iron-wall'.

Marinaise the Iron-wall.

This onee-san whom was clearly older than me, announced her name without shame, showed a daring smile, and drew a card—!

—As I walked along the streets whilst looking at my refreshing and new surroundings, I spotted a building from which cheers could be heard from every so often. On a bout of curiosity, I walked into the establishment.

After looking around as an audience member for a while, I realized that the card game being played here was quite similar to a famous game that I was familiar with, and decided to join at the last moment.

The Japanese people that were transported to this world were probably the ones that spread this game.

As someone who liked and was experienced with this game; In addition to the standard pack, I also bought the premium pack that had a couple of rare cards included in it.

I, who had created an infamous, heinous deck that was banned in Japan—

“—My turn! My turn! It’s forever and ever my turn!!”

“Demon! Just what is with this guy? That combo is too cruel! The outcome of this match is already decided!”

“There is a limit to overkilling! Why does he have to go this far! Isn’t the winner already clear!?”

“Oi, ‘Marinaise the Iron-wall is crying! Someone go stop him already!”

With my back turned to such an audience, I continued to indulge in this nostalgic game.

“Please end this already. I’m sorry for being so cheeky there.”

The onee-san that I had brought an end to without allowing her to do anything, cried as she apologized.

“It was a good match. Let’s play again sometime.”

“Never. Please give me a break.”

I offered to shake hands at the end of the match, but instead, my hand was filled with the bet for this match.

Yes, this was the nation of casinos, Elroad.

Even a simple game would be tied to gambling.

After the onee-san left, I shouted to everyone in the building in high spirits.

“Next opponent please!”

—A few hours after that.

After my winstreak with no foreseeable end, I left the building, and headed to the next place.

I didn’t have a specific destination in mind, but exploring an unknown town made me feel excited.

As I shook my – now – considerably heavy purse in a good mood, I began to feel a bit hungry. So I decided to look for an appropriate shop around me—

“Kyaa-! Someone help—! There’s someone who looked like they turned into a mummy in the sand bath! Is there anyone that can use healing magic!?”

Seeing a pasta store, I decided to stop there for lunch.

“Welcome, may I ask if you are alone? If that’s the case, sit anywhere you like on the counter—”

Sitting on the counter seat that the waitress led me to, I ordered a few appropriate dishes.

As I waited idly for my dishes to arrive, the voices of men sitting on a nearby table came into earshot.

“My, what a yield we had today! A toast for Elroad!”

“You got that right. With business going this well already, everything seems to go well no matter what we do. I was worried when I heard that his highness would be leaving on a diplomatic trip for a long period of time, but my, isn’t the prince is a lot more capable than we thought?”

...Hm?

I heard that this nation was going through economic difficulties. What do they mean by ‘business is going well’?

Hearing about that stupid prince has really caught my attention as well.

“But you know, the reason our business is going so well is probably due to the management of the prime minister-sama. Although the idiot prince seems to have the last call on political manners, I heard that he doesn’t do anything but play around all day.”

“Rather than a toast for Elroad, we should have a toast for the prime minister-dono!”

“““OOH, a toast to the prime minister—!”””

Based on what they said, the one directing the political matters in this nation was the prime minister?

In other words, that means the prime minister was the one that cut the support?

However, the king isn't in this nation right now, huh?

Although I heard that the prince was about the same age as Iris, it was a given for royalty in this world to participate in political matters at around this age, right?

When I was about Iris' age, I was being scolded by my parents for playing games all night—

After leaving the store, I began to think about Iris, who I'd left back at the hotel. So I decided to go buy the gift.

I didn't have any clue as to what kind of things Iris liked.

I feel like she'd be happy with anything I buy, but there's no way I could buy something too cheap for the princess of a nation...

"Oi, it seems that there's an amazing artist at Masheran!"

"Masheran? You mean the super high class store, Masheran? There's no way an artist could get into that store you know?"

"Just come with me already! It seems that she's freely using the equipment from that store as her props!"

I saw some men come dashing out of a certain, small store, and my eyes inadvertently drifted to the sign.

It seemed to be an accessory store. I entered the store looking for something I could buy as a gift.

"Welcome."

The only person in the store was the rather unsociable store owner, who continued to sit behind the counter and read the newspaper.

Looking around, I saw a variety of small accessories that ranged from handmade necklaces for ladies, and burly bracelets for men.

Glancing at the counter, I saw a variety of considerably classier-looking accessories lined behind the glass case.

I'll just choose something appropriate from there.

Thus, I began to look for something that would be fitting for Iris...

"Uwoah-!? W-, What, is it an earthquake!?"

Ignoring the store owner's shouts that mixed in with the exploding sounds from outside, I suddenly remembered— When I infiltrated the castle in the past, I had stolen Iris' ring.

Although I still held onto it with the utmost care, I'm still troubled about whether or not to return it.

That's it, a ring!

Although I can't really say much since I was the one who stole it in the first place, I'll feel bad if I don't do anything about it.

It might be a different ring, but I want to at least give her a temporary replacement.

Then it's decided, I'll buy her a ring as a gift.

In any case, I'll buy the most expensive ring this store has. However, looking through the glass case, I didn't see any rings.

"Old man, are you selling any rings? The more expensive the better."

"Rings? We don't sell such high-class goods here, you know? At best, there's the one for kids over there."

The store owner who had been startled by the explosion pointed towards a corner of the store.

Placed there, were rings priced at a couple hundred eris a piece.

Is this really suitable for a princess?

Speaking of which, I just came to this town, so I don't know any high-class accessory stores. What should I do now?

Ah, that's right.

I'll just buy this for now, and I'll give it to her if I can't find anything else.

“Old man, give me one of this ring!”

Putting the ring in my pocket, I left the store—

Part 3

“Ah, you’re back. So, how was your sightseeing?”

Near evening, at the place where we separated at around noontime—

When I returned, my companions were already waiting for me.

Aqua sat on the ground hugging her knee, and rocked back and forth in a carefree manner, whilst Darkness had a wholly satisfied expression as warm air exuded from her body.

As for Megumin, who was being carried by Darkness, seemed to have a refreshed expression.

As for the three men that served as their escorts...

First, one of them was missing.

Another stood frozen in place, and stared blankly into the distance with a darkened expression. As for the last person, he sat on the floor, hugged his arms, and murmured to himself, as though he had been scarred for life.

I don’t really want to hear what happened...

Having noticed my feelings from my expression alone, Megumin said.

“Kazuma, I know you don’t want to hear this, but I think it would be better for you to know.”

“...Alright, let’s hear it.”

It can’t be helped...

I cast a glance towards Darkness, who seemed to be in a good mood.

“... Erm, first, let’s talk about the person that isn’t here. When he heard that we had just arrived, he said that, ‘in order to soothe our stress from travelling, we should first head to a high-class healthcare facility, and take our time to enjoy ourselves while we’re there.’”

Oho.

“When he brought us to the healthcare facility, I noticed that they had my favorite sand bath. When you take a sand bath, you lie down on the floor wearing something called a YU-KA-TA, and then you are buried in heated sand. It’s truly a wonderful experience, but... for some reason, that man thoughtlessly followed my lead and took a sand bath as well. And then he said ‘Alright, I will stay in this longer than Darkness-chan, and show my guts and cool sides!’, so I unconsciously got serious about it as well...”

“By the time I noticed it, he was practically on the verge of death. The employees there, who had noticed this as well, brought him to the hospital.”

...I see, so that’s why one of them was missing.

Continuing, I moved my eyes to the man who had his arms around his knees.

When I did, Megumin awkwardly looked away.

“...Uhm, right. So, that person said ‘I’ll bring everyone to somewhere nice’ and brought us to a creek outside town... And then he was like ‘Look at this, how’d you like it? This is a famous scenic spot in this town, known as the onion duck breeding grounds. They’re really cute right?’ while looking proudly at the mob of onion ducks. Well, you should know this, but onion ducks are monsters that gives a large amount of experience points, you see? So I was like, ‘why don’t I clean them up in one fell swoop using explosion magic?’... After that, he looked like he received some massive shock, and has been like that ever since...”

I mean, he brought you to see a flock of ducks just to have them blown away before his very eyes.

I turned my eyes away from the guy whose body trembled uncontrollably, and turned towards Aqua, who kept saying that ‘I didn’t do anything wrong’.

... I get the feeling that what she did was the worst out of the three.

“Uhm, as for Aqua, you see...”

As Megumin remained at a loss for words, the man who had been remained still this entire time as a result of exhausting all his willpower, vigorously stood up.

“After getting dead-drunk in this town’s most high-grade store, this onee-chan

said 'let me show you a super-duper amazing performance!' and freely used the store's equipment and started some kind of show. No, it was a truly amazing performance. It really was, but you know, how could anyone have possibly known that there were no special tricks being used at all!? Hey, an entire grand piano completely disappeared after being wrapped in a handkerchief you know? From size alone, there's no way that it could be hidden in a handkerchief right!?"

She did something strange again huh.

But she really did catch my interest. I'll tell her to show me some other time.

"After that, that high-class store charged us for the equipment and piano that was used in the performance you see... And then, the onion duck cultivation center... I didn't even ask them to pay the full reparations, all I asked was for them to pay half.... Ah! Oi wait, I'll be scolded by my parents at this rate! Even a third is fine...!"

We covered our ears and fled the scene.

Part 4

“How was Elroad? Did everyone have a good time?”

Iris came to greet us when we returned to the hotel.

“I created a legend in this town you know? As for these people over here, in some other sense, they created a legend as well.”

Iris tilted her head in confusion, but after seeing Darkness and co.’s expressions, she decided not to go any further.

It was then—

“Well then Iris-sama, you must be tired from today’s activities, so why don’t you sleep early tonight in preparation for tomorrow? To allow you to rest comfortably, I’ve requested that your meal be directly sent to your room. Please rest well.”

Said Darkness. The way she spoke was more formal than usual.

“Isn’t it rather early to go to sleep? Well, it’s true that I too want to prepare well for tomorrow, but...”

In response to Iris, who tilted her head in puzzlement, Darkness, seemingly as though she was acting, showed an extremely apologetic expression.

“Iris-sama, your meeting tomorrow is of utmost importance. Just for today, I feel that you must absolutely go to sleep early, so that you may display the limits of your beauty tomorrow.”

“...Is that so? I understand, well then, I will retire early for tonight.”

As Iris turned to return to her room, she stole a couple of glances in my direction. Then, Darkness clapped her hands with a loud ‘smack’.

“Alright, then let us go to sleep early as well, after all, we have an important meeting tomorrow. Although I feel that it’s rather early, resting when we should is also part of our job as bodyguards!”

—This is... probably ‘that’ right?

What Darkness and Rain had discussed back at the castle, the plan where Darkness would drug me, right?

Since I’ve known Darkness for this long already, there’s no way I wouldn’t notice something fishy like that.

I, who had quickly returned to my room, made no plans to sleep, and continued to be cautious.

Just what kind of method will she use to drug me?

The most direct method would be for her to kick down the door and make me drink it through brute force.

However, there was still the danger of me resisting.

There was also the possibility of her mixing it into my dinner, but all of us had gone out to eat today.

I’m pretty sure that she’s going to conduct her plan tonight, but just what kind of methods will she use...

Then, as I worriedly tried to read Darkness’ thoughts—

“Kazuma, are you still awake?”

The knocking sounds on the door meshed with Darkness’ voice.

It was currently 8 o’clock.

Even in this world where the consensus was to sleep early and wake early, this would still be considered too early to go to sleep.

“I’m awake. The door isn’t locked, so feel free to come in, ok?”

However, she wholly underestimated me.

Did she really think that I would be drugged so easily?

Although I didn’t know what method she planned to use, but since I have the upper hand, I’ll take her for a spin— ...Then, such thought immediately flew out of the door.

“I-, Is that so? Then I’ll come in. I have something I want to talk to you about.”

Because Darkness entered wearing an extremely revealing negligee—

—Entering the room, Darkness placed a giant bottle of saké on the table in the center of the room.

The one that took this too lightly was me.

Yes, my opponent was a noble, whom were adept at trickery and schemes.

However, I hadn't once expected her to use seduction.

"W-W-W-, What is with that dress? I can almost see it you know? A variety of things that absolutely shouldn't be seen, that is."

"-!?"

Hearing my straight-man rebuttal, Darkness' face immediately flushed red in embarrassment.

That's good. At the very least, she didn't seem composed enough to be immune to what I say. It didn't seem like she would shamelessly try to coax me either.

"Really? Well, this should be normal right? There's a saying that travels will release the restraints of people. More importantly, here, why don't we first have a drink?"



Hearing what I said, Darkness maintained her composure and removed the

bottle's cork.

The dull sizzling sound shows that the bottle hasn't been unsealed until now.

In any case, the saké shouldn't be drugged.

"Sure. Since it's still too soon to go to sleep, why don't I have some sleep-saké? You went through all the trouble to bring it here after all.

Saying that, I grabbed one of the glasses that Darkness was about to pour the saké into, and— "Ah, no!"

And heavily dropped it on the floor.

Accompanied by the sound of crashing glass, the shattered fragments spread across the floor.

Seeing Darkness' face begin to change color, I pointed my hand towards the shattered pieces and— "'Wind Breath'"

I used wind magic to drive the fragments into a corner of the room.

"...Hah. Sorry about this Darkness, my hand slipped a little.... Well, there is still one more glass isn't there? I'll go downstairs and get another one, and have the employees here clean this up tomorrow."

Saying that, I turned to leave the room...

"W-, Wait Kazuma. I mean, uhm... One glass is enough isn't it? To start with, all I was planning to do was pour the saké for you, as a reward for your hard work until now!"

As I was about to leave, she pulled strongly on my clothes.

This girl. For a noble, whose skill in trickery and finesse should be a given, she sure was bad at deception wasn't she?

"Hmm? And what kind of work have I done? Do I look like I've been working hard? I, who have done nothing but sleep in everyday?"

"—N-, No!? Uhm... I mean, didn't we defeat another demon king army general just a while ago!? The fact that we've buried a countless number of demon king army generals is actually an amazing thing you know!?"

Darkness hurriedly thought of an excuse, and with a slightly serious expression,

she looked me straight in the eye and said.

“I believe that we could do all this because you were our party leader. I know we cause you nothing but trouble, but thanks for everything, Kazuma...”

Saying that, she showed a refreshing, ulterior-motive-less smile.

I see, so this is the way in which nobles mix truth with lies.

...However, it's too naïve.

Although I was fazed for a mere moment, I am a careful man that doubt anyone during meetings.

I grabbed Darkness' hand that held onto the bottle.

“That's what I should be saying. I'm just someone who holds the weakest job of 'adventurer'. I wouldn't be able to do anything without you guys. Especially you Darkness. If you weren't here, our party would've probably been wiped several times over. The one who should be rewarded for their work is you. Here, take the glass. I will pour for you.”

“Eh-”

Looking towards my hand, Darkness let off a surprised yelp.

After a short period of shock, she realized that I was about to take the bottle off her hands.

“N-, No no, it's fine Kazuma. Just your words are enough to satisfy me. Also, I came here for the purpose of rewarding your efforts, so I'll feel ashamed if I let you host me instead. Come on, let go of the bottle and take the glass. I'll pour for you.”

Despite her calm tone of voice, she forcefully grasped the bottle in order to stop me from taking it away.

Judging by her resistance, it seems that – rather than the saké – the glass was drugged instead.

“No no no, how could I let a noble like you pour saké for me? Let me suck up to this ojou-sama every once in a while, otherwise, well, you know, we're going to the castle as bodyguards tomorrow, right? There's a chance that we might make

some huge mistake. So if I don't do this, I won't be able to shamelessly announce your name when the time comes!"

I tightened my grip and tried to pull the bottle away, and finally, Darkness' true nature came gushing out.

"Hey, stop being fussy and let go! You always treat me however you like. At this point, do you really think that that kind of makeshift excuse will still work!? In the first place, on our way here, you kept scolding me saying that there was no use for me here, didn't you!? You always treat me with prejudice, making fun of me by saying that I'm a useless girl, saying that 'because crusader is a defensive class, there's no occasion for you to play an active role in anything'!"

"You should be the one to let go! Despite you having no intention to actually reward me in the first place, I would much rather you 'reward' me with 'service' rather than saké! Look, this glass is laced with something right? If it's nothing to feel ashamed of, why don't you drink it, huh!?"

"Kuh, i-, it isn't anything to feel ashamed of! But I'm not going to drink it regardless. After all, this saké is meant as a reward for you! But I see, rather than saké, you prefer my body instead right? Alright then, if you're going to go as far to say that, then why don't I reward you with my body!? Go and lie down on the bed!"

"You... For someone who just tried to drug me, you sure are angry, when it should be the other way around! Alright then, if you're going to say that, then do reward me!"

An eye for an eye. Darkness and I, with unusually high-strung emotions, moved to the top of the bed.

Although she spouts this kind of nonsense on a daily basis, I know full well that she'll back down come the real thing.

I removed my top, and lay spread-eagle on the bed.

"Come at me!"

"Y-, You!"

Seeing my naked upper body, Darkness – unsure of where to look – turned her

head away.

“Oh, what’s wrong, what’s wrong? Are you really just an ojou-sama who’s all talk!? Well of course, whilst you always call incompetent or worthless, in the end, you’re actually just some ojou-sama that would get embarrassed by a kiss on the cheek!”

“You’re getting ahead of yourself. How could I let a plebeian like you belittle me! How about I keep to my word, and reward you with my body, hm!?”

Without waiting to finish, Darkness straddled my body.

Though, it seems like she was just pressing on my body without any idea of what to do.

“Ooi, you’re not thinking that this lukewarm massage is actually ‘rewarding me with your body’ right? You get what I mean right? After all, your mind is full of nothing but those dirty fantasies!”

“Don’t call it dirty fantasies! I am Dustiness Ford Lalatina. I have decided that regardless of the difficulties ahead of me, I will never run away...!”

The door was swung open with a loud slam.

Standing there was Megumin in her pajamas, whose eyes shined bright crimson red.

“What’s with all this noise, don’t you think you’re being a bit annoying!? Just what the heck are you doing!?”

I, who was pressed down by Darkness, immediately called to Megumin for help.

“Save me Megumin, I’m being violated!”

“Aah, y-, you-!?”

Part 5

“Geez, just what the heck is going through your mind, Darkness? Although I’m not telling you to stop being in heat, Iris is also staying at this hotel, you know? At the very least, please wait until we get home to do that kind of thing.”

“Y-, You’re mistaken Megumin! There’s a reason for this!”

When Megumin entered the fray, I – who was almost assaulted by Darkness – immediately reported the situation to her.

“What is there to misunderstand? You even tried to drug me. The glass was laced with a sleeping drug right? If you weren’t thinking of doing ‘that’, why don’t you drink the saké with the cup you brought? After I fall asleep from the drug, you were planning on ‘amusing yourself’ with my body, am I wrong? After all, you already have a previous offense.”

“Y-Y-Y-Y-, You’re wr...! That’s not what I was thinking, I have a valid reason for this....”

Given all the irrefutable evidence, Darkness was at a disadvantage.

And there was also one more piece.

“What is there to misunderstand when you’re dressed in such a shameless fashion? Just a little bit more and I’ll be able to see ‘a variety of things’. It futile to say anything Darkness! Come on, just come clean and tell us your true intentions!”

Yes, the fact that she was dressed more shamelessly than usual was nothing but an arrow to the knee.

Now that I think about it, just what was she thinking dressing in such a manner?

“This is-, uhm! ...uu, this is... because you will undoubtedly do something strange during tomorrow’s meeting, I decided that I would drug you to force you to sleep for a while. But I couldn’t help but feel that it would be pitiful if you stayed asleep the entire time during our stay at the nation of entertainment,

so...”

“I see, so the reason you’re dressed that way is because you intended to give a bit of ‘service’ was it? In any case, you were surely thinking to yourself that ‘keep going like this...!’ and actually looked forward to this just a little bit, right? Geez, you’re such an obscene noble lady aren’t you!?”

In the face of Megumin who did nothing but accuse her, Darkness accepted her fate.

“You’re wro...! U-... U-..., I wouldn’t deny it any longer, I am an obscene noble lady...”

“Exactly. If Darkness’ dad back in Axel finds out about this, I wonder what he would say? Haa... Haa... Come on, what’s the problem! Say it loud and clear!”

Megumin, who was heatedly berating Darkness, began to take heavy breaths.

Occasionally, I think that somewhere deep inside her, she was bit of a sadist.

I sat cross-legged on the bed directly in front of Darkness. Still half-naked, I stretched out my legs, and said in an arrogant manner.

“Geez, Darkness. I’m not stupid enough to do something that would make trouble for Iris you know? I wouldn’t suddenly attack Iris’ fiancé, so rest assured ok? I merely dislike this engagement that doesn’t align well with my will. When you were forced into a marriage by that lord old man, I came to save you right?”

<TL Note: The specific phrase Kazuma uses ‘ふんぞり返る’ can mean both ‘lying down and stretching out legs’ as well as ‘becoming arrogant’.> “.....-”

Likely, thinking back to when I saved her, Darkness lowered her head, and her ears turned slightly red.

“If Iris really desires this marriage, then I wouldn’t do anything to get in the way. I just dislike the fact that she’s willing to sacrifice herself through this marriage, even if it’s against her true desires. Although there isn’t much I can do if it’s a noble or a princess, I don’t want anyone I know to fall into that kind of situation. I can’t stand it when a female friend becomes another man’s object when they haven’t so much as dated you know?”

“This man. He sure has the guts to say such a thing when he ditched us in front

of those other men.”

“Agreed. Sometimes, I’d like to see what goes through his head.”

“That’s because I believe in you guys you know? You guys aren’t easy girls that would get seduced by some random guys that we’ve never seen before, right?”

Hearing what I said, the two of them showed troubled expressions, and exchanged glances with one another.

“Despite him being so carefree, this man is quite underhanded occasionally.”

“That’s right. Although he doesn’t seem like the kind of person that would be easily led on by girls, he – as usual – has a silver tongue and is quite crafty with his ways...”

Uhuh, it doesn’t seem like I’m being believed in the slightest.

Well, during the time I was alone in the afternoon, I had taken a minor detour to look for indecent stores like the succubus service store, so I didn’t have the right to say anything, but...

Then, Darkness stood up, as if something had come over her.

“I understand Kazuma. As someone who’s continued to refuse matchmaking sessions, I don’t have the right to berate you in any way. If anything happens, I will take responsibility, so do as you please. You will have the backing of my household from here on out.”

“Well, that sounds pretty good. I mean, the nee-chan named Claire said the exact same thing you know? With the backing of two, great noble families, I should be able to go out of my way to do some things without being in too much trouble.

“Claire believed in you enough to entrust you with this? Do you even understand what this is?”

“Not really, but from your attitude, I can tell that the white-suit nee-chan trusts me a whole lot more than you do.”

Hearing what I said, Darkness, who had known me far longer than Claire, seemed to fall into frustration. She reached for the similar looking pendant that hung around her neck...

“Kazuma, I believe you as well, so take.....uu, t-, take this...”

“What is it? If you’re going to do it then stop putting on airs and hand it over! Oi, what’s the problem? Let go!”

As she continued to hesitate, I forcefully pulled the pendant out of her hands, and hung it around my neck.

“Anyway, just leave everything to me tomorrow. Basically, our main goal for tomorrow is to prevent the defense funding from being cut, and I just need to avoid disturbing the other sides’ mood right? I won’t do anything bad, ok? After all, I’ve decided that I won’t allow any misfortune to befall Iris.”

Hearing what I said—

“I see... Mm, I suppose that’s right. I understand then, I’ll leave everything to you tomorrow, and I shall entrust Iris-sama to you! If everything goes smoothly, then...”

Darkness, who seemed relieved—

“This time around, I wouldn’t thank you with a childish kiss to the cheek, and give you something more real instead...”

Although she said that with barely audible murmurs, I could clearly see what she said using my lip-reading skill.

And so, I burned those words into my mind.

Part 6

“Woah— Oi, oi, this castle is pretty expensive-looking isn’t it? Darkness, regardless of whether it’s the size of the financial sector or the size of the castle, doesn’t our capital lose to this place in a variety of ways?”

The next morning.

Arriving at the castle in Elroad, we felt pressured by the sheer size and glamour of the castle.

“This is really something else isn’t it? If I struck this place with explosion magic, I wonder what would happen? I feel like I might start chanting just thinking about it.”

“Alright Megumin, we can take it from here, so feel free to go back to the hotel, ok?”

Without delay, Megumin began to spout such absentminded, dangerous things. Hearing that, Darkness grimaced, and acted to keep her in check.

“Hey hey, if I do a performance to change the sign on the castle’s flag to the insignia of the Axis cult, do you think that they’ll be surprised?”

“Aqua, Aqua. When we get back to Axel, I’ll have house Dustiness donate to the Axis cult, so please act maturely for today.”

Grabbing on to Aqua, who continued to stare at the top of the castle, Darkness looked as though she was about to cry.

Idiot. Why would you only pay special attention to me when our entire group is full of problem children?

“Alrighty then, let’s see how much of a man that little brat we’re going to meet is. I wonder how long he’ll last under my attacks?”

“What happened to what you said yesterday!? If you’re planning to do something stupid, then return the pendant that I gave you... Ah-!”

I avoided Darkness’ hand that stretched towards my neck, and quickly hid the pendant that bore the insignia of her household.

“Y-Y-, You, where did you just put the pendant of my household! In some sense, it is a family treasure, so...!”

Seemingly disgruntled that I hid the pendant from her, Darkness lashed out at me.

“Oi, you’ve been pretty noisy for a while now. Just where do you think we are? Not only are we bodyguards, we are also representatives of our nation. Be a bit more conscious of your behavior would you?”

“Why are you of all people warning me? Ah geez, I’m begging you, just act maturely...!”

Seeing us being as noisy as usual, Iris happily giggled.

“This is my first meeting with the prince, but I don’t feel nervous at all because everyone is here with me. Thank you everyone.”

“Look, Iris is completely calm and displaying proper manners. Despite being her retainer, why are you being the noisiest out of all of us?”

“Y-Y-Y-, You...! Whose fault do you think it is that I’m being noisy...!”

After being told that the prince would personally come to receive us, we waited tens of minutes.

As we couldn’t bear to wait any longer, we began to poke fun at Darkness. It was then—

“Geez, this is why Belzerg’s commoners are so-... Making a fuss in front of the castle, do you even know what etiquette is?”

He had a high-pitched voice that was unique to children.

From the looks of it, he should be around the same age as Iris.

Although, despite his age, he was rather tall. From a size perspective, he was about the same as me.

The red-haired, freckled boy, as if to show off his power, brought a large amount of retainers with him.

On his head was a tiny crown, and it would appear that he was Iris’ fiancé.

“Look, didn’t he just get angry cause Darkness just couldn’t calm down?”

“Geez, Darkness. We’re facing royalty, you know? This isn’t the place to make a fuss in.”

“Kuuuuh-...!

Starting from the prince, Megumin and Aqua who stood beside Darkness, also cautioned her. Darkness, whose face flushed red with embarrassment, promptly lowered her head.

“Uhm...”

Then, Iris, who had been behind Darkness, walked in front of the common-senseless, mannerless, idiot retainer.

“Are you the first prince of Elroad, Revi-sama? I am the first princess of Belzarg, Iris. I came all the way here to see you, so I’m happy that we are able to meet today.”

Iris showed a fresh smile. With a small, clear, mature voice that was unbecoming of her age, she elegantly, adorably, and perfectly performed the proper etiquette.

Her appearance, which seemed as though it was covering for Darkness, was like the mature and somewhat nervous appearance she had when I first met her. It was truly befitting of a princess of a nation.



“I-, Iris-sama...!”

Darkness raised her voice, moved by the noble appearance of her lord that she once thought of as a little sister.

I don't have the right to say this, but regardless of whether it was this girl or Claire, everyone was overprotective of Iris.

"So you're my fiancé? Although I heard that even the female children of the Belzerg clan are militants, you actually look pretty weak. And here I was thinking that I would see a strong and cool appearance. How disappointing."

"Eh-? Ah, uhm... Sorry..."

Oh?

"And why do you have so few bodyguards? Is Belzerg really that poor? Instead of only training your muscles, it would be better to put some effort into training your heads so that you can earn some money you know!?"

Saying that, prince Revi showed a belittling smile. Leading his retainers on, they began to laugh.

What's with this little brat? His attitude is quite something despite this being our first meeting.

My first impression of this prince was that he was an idiot child.

Also, I get a revolting feeling from his retainers as well.

Rather, just how is this nation allied or in good relations with ours?

I just can't picture it.

...Then, Revi, with piqued curiosity, walked passed Iris and towards us.

The entourage of retainers that followed behind the prince acted the same as well. The gazes they cast towards Iris showed that they were looking down on her.

And then, some of the retainers opened their eyes wide when they saw Aqua and Megumin.

"On top of that, your bodyguards aren't really anything to write home about either. Their age aside, their equipment looks pretty cheap. I'm actually impressed that you managed to get here safely."

Without noticing his retainer's expressions, the prince continued to make fun of us.

However, this time, not a single laugh could be heard from his retainers.

Thinking that that was strange, the prince turned towards his retainers.

"If you're looking for a fight, then I'll bring it to you."

Megumin, whose eyes were shining bright crimson, took a large step forward.

Part 7

Originally, this act was probably all intended as a diplomatic strategy.

Although I wasn't sure why, the provocation of the prince was probably intended to give us a bad impression of him and to make us angry.

However, they made a single miscalculation—

“You're mistaken! Prince Revi is not familiar with your nation, and doesn't know about the existence of the Crimson Magic Clan! We weren't trying to provoke you or belittle you at-...!”

“Prince, look at them closely! That is a crimson magic clansman! They're a troublesome group of people that even the demon king is forced to acknowledge. They're a group of people that don't understand jokes, so please don't say any more careless things!”

“I-, I understand. I'm sorry! It was my mistake, so please stop chanting your magic!”

At the strong remonstrations of his retainers, the prince showed a frightened expression, and immediately apologized to Megumin, who had started to chant her magic.

“I'll turn a blind eye this time, but don't let there be a second time, alright? My name is Megumin, the one who controls explosion magic, and the one who has buried a countless number of demon king army generals. It would be better for you to not anger me.”

“Understood Megumin-dono. We will work hard to ensure that this never happens again!”

As one of the retainers profusely apologized, the prince showed a somewhat disgruntled expression.

Standing beside us, Darkness pressed her hands hard against her head. She

looked as if she was about to cry.

“I don’t really understand this, but the willingness to apologize is a good thing. When you said that ‘we’re nothing to write home about’, I wanted to give you a taste my holy fist, but I will forgive you this time.”

Just as the situation was about to finally settle, Aqua decided to say something totally unnecessary. In response, the prince glared at her in rage.

“You imbecile, you’re just a mere priest. You dare to...”

“Prince, prince, she is an Axis cultist. On top of that, considering her blue hair and the way she’s dressed, she must be an extremely passionate one! Axis cultists are said to be more troublesome than tranquility girls and more tenacious than undead.”

The prince, who had changed his target to Aqua, was sharply warned by his retainer. He released a small, frightened yelp.

“Hey, I would very much prefer that you stop putting Axis cultists in the same group as tranquility girls and undead! Apologize! Apologize for putting my children in the same rank as monsters!”

The prince, frightened by Aqua who acted like a self-righteous monster, cast a frightened gaze towards Darkness and I.

Then, he whispered to the retainer beside him.

‘Oi, if that’s the case, then the blonde-haired knight is not an ordinary person either is she?’

‘Prince, that person over there is Dustiness-kyo. They’re a clan that’s known as the shield of the royal family, and they have many powerful knights in every generation. I would advise against making her your enemy.....’

The two might’ve been whispering to one another, but because they didn’t hide their mouths, I could know everything they said.

Then, as should be expected, the prince turned his eyes towards me...

‘That means, that ordinary looking man over there is also...’

‘No, I’ve never seen or heard of him. He’s probably a pack mule or something.’

I'll make sure to send you packing alright.

—Then, as everyone was troubled about how to resolve the situation.

“What is all this noise about?”

Although his appearance was rather normal, I could tell immediately that he was some great authority in the nation. The man wore precisely tailored clothing.

The man, whose presence seemed to overwhelm the prince himself, walked towards us from the castle with an air of composure.

“Prime minister-dono! No, this is...”

From a single line of the retainer, I was able to grasp this person's identity.

He was the prime minister that I heard rumors about in the restaurant yesterday, and it seemed that as of now, he had an iron grip on this nation.

As everyone turned meek and obedient, Iris pulled herself together and greeted the prime minister.

“Nice to meet you. I am the first princess of Belzerg, Iris. I am honored to meet you.”

“Oh my oh my, from the rumors I've heard about the Belzerg clan, I would've never imagined that they would have such a cute princess. I am the prime minister of this nation, Ragcraft. I shall be in your care.”

The prime minister who settled the situation in a brief moment, performed a friendly rite of etiquette, and turned to walk back to the castle.

Everyone released an exasperated breath, and followed behind him.

“Well then, please come this way Iris-sama. I've already prepared a warm reception, so...”

Then—

Aqua, who followed shortly behind the prime minister, began to casually pat his back.

“Wh-, What is it, priest? Is there something about me?”

Towards the prime minister’s instinctive response, Aqua tilted his head in puzzlement.

“I don’t really get it, but I can’t help but feel that there is something weird about you, uncle. However, you don’t stink like a devil or have the presence of an undead you see... Hey uncle, do you happen to be friends with any devils? Or are you raising an undead as a pet or something like that?”

“My apologies Ragcraft-dono! This person is well known as a strange person even amongst axis cultists!”

Aqua, who suddenly said some rather disrespectful things, was immediately pulled away by Darkness, who hurriedly lowered her head to apologize.

Hearing what Darkness said, Aqua slapped and attempted to fling the hand that grabbed onto her.

“No, there’s no helping it if she’s an Axis cultist. Ah, please, I really don’t mind, so...”

The prime minister, who had been touched by Aqua, showed a rigid expression.

Part 8

“I-, I ask of you, somehow, please!”

Iris, who had been pleasantly conversing with the prime minister, suddenly raised her voice.

Entering the castle, we received a warm welcome just as the prime minister had said.

However, for a great kingdom like this, this party was rather frugal.

“Even if you say that, no can do. My nation is currently undergoing financial difficulties. Please look at this party. Even though this is the reception of the princess of our important allied nation, Belzerg, we had no choice but to cut even those costs, and save on accommodations. That’s why, regardless of how much Iris-sama pleads us, we are unable to take the burden of providing defense funding any longer.”

The prime minister, who only appeared to be apologetic, was quite clear with his rejection.

Besides us, the prince, the prime minister, and a few followers, there wasn’t anyone here. In this small party venue, everyone ate and went about as they pleased.

“However, from what I’ve seen of this nation, I don’t believe that it is undergoing any financial difficulties....”

I wandered aimlessly around Iris to eavesdrop on the conversation. However, given how it was going, the likely winner of this meeting was evident.

“No, that’s just how it appears from a foreign nation’s perspective. All the people of this nation are suffering, and we don’t have anything to spare to support you...”

“I-, Is that so...”

Hearing what the prime minister said, Iris cast her head down despondently.

This would be Darkness’ – a noble’s – time to shine, but unfortunately, she

didn't have the opportunity to turn her eyes away from the two problem children whom were eating and drinking without a care in the world.

Which means that it's my time to shine.

"Excuse me, but may I have a word?"

"O-, Onii-sama?"

As I intruded on the conversation, the prime minister showed a thoroughly disgruntled expression.

"If I remember correctly, you are one of Iris-sama's bodyguards. I am currently having an important conversation with her, so could you please wait until later?"

"No no, I'm her brother after all. Thus, I would like to say something as her guardian."

The prime minister who was looking at me with 'who the heck is this guy' eyes a moment ago, opened his eyes wide when I said that I was her brother.

Murmurs of 'Brother? That is prince Jatis!?' spread throughout the room.

"I see. Iris-sama called you onii-sama, so could it be that you are... I heard that you were supposed to be fighting on the frontlines against the demon king army, so could it be that my information was wrong? Also, that black hair, and black eyes... could it be the hero's atavism?"

The prime minister seemed to have forged a misunderstanding on his own.

I don't really get the strange things he said about black hair and eyes being a result of some atavism or something, but it suited me just fine for the current situation.

"Anyway, regardless of who comes to request us, we are unable to provide any more support. My apologies, but please give up on this."

He said so with a strong, emphasizing tone. Perhaps he was cautious of me.

However...

"I see... Iris, if that's the case, why don't we go and ask prince Revi? If we ask the prince for money, then you wouldn't mind right?"

"Wha-!? Didn't I already say that we don't have anything to spare?"

Furthermore, the politics of this nation are under my management, so even if the prince says anything...”

Towards the prime minister, whose facial colors began to distort, I rubbed my palms together and moved my face closer.

“I heard this rumor in town, but the prince has decisive authority over the political matters of this nation right? Also, the people in town are praising you you know? Saying that ‘business is going well thanks to the prime minister-dono’ and the like. Wait what what? Business is going well you say? Don’t you get the feeling that something doesn’t add up?”

Hearing what I said, the prime minister showed an extremely displeased expression.

“I understand. However, please discuss this matter with the prince himself, as I have no authority to say anything to him.”

He said that as though he was throwing something away.

Alright, things seem to be going better now, and that prince seems like an idiot as well.

Iris and I quickly headed to where the prince was. The prime minister followed shortly behind, probably so that he could oversee the situation.

He was probably making sure the prince wouldn’t be won over by us.

“Prince Revi, how do you do? May I have a word with you?”

Iris smiled towards the prince, who was having a pleasant conversation with his retainers.

In response, the prince, who had been in a good mood showed a sour expression, and—

“Now’s a bad time, but what do you want to say? I don’t have anything to say to the Belzerg’s barbaric princess alright?”

To say such insolent things to Iris...

Alright, I’ll tell him off.

“Oi you little brat, you’re saying quite harsh things to my little sister again,

aren't you? Do you even know what etiquette is? Are you making fun of us? Hey, that isn't the attitude a fiancé should be showing, right?"

"O-, Onii-sama!"

"Wha-!? You imbelice, you dare say such... Onii-sama?"

Iris pulled my arm, and brought me to a corner of the room.

"Onii-sama, please don't act so imprudently. I must procure the defense and expedition funding for my nation. Otherwise, we wouldn't be able to reward the adventurers for their efforts. Please, even if it's just for my sake, could you endure this?"

"... If you're going to say that, there's no way I wouldn't listen, you know?"

Moved by her pleading, upward glance, I retracted my seething rage.

Speaking of the prince, he was looking at me from a fair distance away, and chattering with his retainers.

There were probably explaining who I was.

Of course, I wasn't really her brother.

"My, I'm so sorry for what I said just now. Anyone would get angry if their little sister was belittled in front of them right? Whilst you might've made fun of my little sister, I was also in the wrong, so I hope that this will be water under the bridge. The mentally strange crimson magic clansman and axis cultists were just about to make a move, you know?"

"Hie-!? N-, No, mm. I said too much as well, so let us consider this as water under the bridge."

The prince showed a rather interesting reaction. Perhaps he was extremely afraid of the crimson magic clansmen and axis cultists.

Let's go with the flow and ask about the money.

Realizing my intentions, Iris nodded her head, and turned to face the prince.

"Actually prince, about the defense and support funding..."

"No."

Before Iris could finish, the prince flatly rejected her.

There wasn't a trace of his fearful expression to be found, as should be expected of a member of royalty.

"I heard about it from Ragcraft. My answer has already been decided. Absolutely 'no'."

This is what they call 'being unapproachable'.

<TL Note: The phrase Kazuma uses here is 取りつく島もない (tori tsuku shima mo nai), which translates to 'there's not even an island to latch onto'. In this instance, it describes Revi as showing a cold attitude, without even leaving a choice to reply.> "Uhm, may I please ask why? If my nation cannot gain support, and is conquered by the demon king, then the next nation to be targeted will be yours you know."

"You don't need to worry about that. We already have ideas in store. Rather, from today onwards, my nation has no intention of opposing the demon king army. Thus, it will be hard to ask for our cooperation even if it's not related to funding or support."

.....

"That is...! W-, What do you mean? If that's the case, what will become of the alliance between our nations?"

"We have our own circumstances. We can continue to be allied, but we do not want to incite the demon king army you see? Ah, also, while we're at it, let's dissolve our engagement. In the first place, my parents decided it on their own. To start with, I didn't want to marry a barbaric Belzerg princess. Once I heard that the ladies were stronger than men there, I decided that there was no way I would marry you."

For a mere moment—

For just a mere moment, Iris showed an overjoyed expression, to the point where tears immediately filled her eyes. In the next moment, she grabbed the prince by the chest.

"I don't care in the slightest about the marriage, but as for your complete

refusal to support...!”

“It doesn’t matter if you show that kind of expression, the answer is still ‘no’, If you consider yourself to be a member of royalty, then... Gu-, wa-, wait stop, I can’t breathe....! Hey, stop...!”

As Iris continued to hold the prince by the collar, his face turned paler and paler. The surrounding retainers hurriedly move to stop her.

“Geho-...! W-, What a barbaric girl! As I thought, I made the right choice by dissolving this engagement. This is enough. Since you’re done saying what you need to say, scram!”

The prince, whose eyes filled with tears, gave his verdict to Iris.

“...I understand”

As Iris lowered her head, the prince showed a happy expression.

“I see. Then...”

“I will return tomorrow.”

Iris interrupted the prince with a bold statement.

“...Eh?”

Towards the puzzled prince, Iris rose her small chest high, and pronounced.

“I will come visit tomorrow. No, not just tomorrow. I will come visit the day after, and the day after that. Until I managed to secure the support, I will come visit as many times as I need to.”

Faced with Iris, who looked him straight in the eye, the prince’s mouth opened wide in surprise for a moment, and then— “D-, Do as you like!”

When he finally recovered his composure, he stated such.

Hearing that, Iris said with a smile.

“Yes, I will return!”

Iris then took my hand, and turned to leave.

Then, to our backs—

“Oi, you can only bring one bodyguard tomorrow! And don’t bring the crimson

magic clansman or the axis cultist! The same goes for the house Dustiness' lady! You're only permitted to bring your weak looking brother!"

The prince, as if to at least put up some form of resistance, spouted those words at us.

Chapter 4: Praising this Militant Princess!

Part 1

The next morning—

Iris and I saw the others off in front of the hotel.

“Well then Kazuma, we’ll be going. I feel like I’ll definitely win today, ‘cause when I was drinking tea earlier, the tea stem was floating upright!”

<TL Note: Considered a sign of good luck in Japan>

“Aqua, since sunrise, weren’t you making tea and converting it back into water until the stem stood up?”

Aqua was headed to the casino.

As for Megumin, she wanted to search for something, so she was going to move independently.

“Kazuma, I’ll leave Iris-sama to you, ok? Although I feel somewhat helpless, but since the other party had told me not to come, it can’t been helped. I will go and investigate this town. At the very least, I should look for information that we can use as leverage in our negotiations.”

Darkness was planning to explore the town.

Finally—

“We’ll be going then. We will absolutely secure the support funding!”

As the prince had pronounced yesterday, Iris and I headed to the castle.

Darkness signaled with her hands for me to come closer.

“Kazuma, sorry I can’t help. I’ll leave the rest to you. Originally, I was supposed to be responsible for this sort of thing...”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll do something about this. I said it didn’t I, that I wouldn’t allow any misfortune to befall Iris.”

In response to what I said, Darkness nodded once, with a serious expression on her face.

“We’ll be going then. If I earn a lot of money, I’ll buy you a souvenir, ok Kazuma!?”

After Aqua finished, we left for our destinations.

—Arriving at the castle, Iris and I were immediately given a trial by the prince.

“By ‘competition’, what does he mean...”

We were brought to the training grounds of the castle.

The prince, sneered to himself, and said to Iris, who seemed to be bewildered.

“Not much. Yesterday, I thought that our negotiations were over. However, you guys said that you wanted it to continue. From my perspective, there’s no merit to be found in further negotiations, but...”

Saying that, the prince raised his hands towards the knights gathered at the training grounds.

“I like interesting things. Fight my subordinates here. If you win, then I’ll listen to what you have to say. How’s that, will you accept?”

“I’ll accept!”

Iris immediately pounced at the prince’s proposition.

Then, as if it was a given, she drew her sword, and gleefully stood in front of the prince.

I’m supposed to be her bodyguard, but it didn’t seem like Iris was going to make me do anything.

The surrounding knights – unable to believe that a young girl like her would step up the challenge – were stunned for a single moment...

“Prince Revi, allow me to handle this!”

“No, allow me! I’ll show this cheeky lady what proper manners are!”

“Please wait. I am the weakest amongst the knights here. It would only be

proper for me to be the first...”

Perhaps feeling that they were being looked down on by foreigners, the knights all scuffled over who would fight.

On the other hand, the prince showed a rather placid expression—

“Well, just wait up you guys... Oi, are you fine with fighting? Are you sure you don’t want your brother over there to fight instead?”

The prince, as if to ridicule Iris, gave such a suggestion.

“It doesn’t matter. It wouldn’t reach the point where onii-sama would need to make a move. I alone am enough. Well then everyone, feel free to come at me anytime!”

Iris casually thrust her sword into the ground, and grandly announced that to everyone.

However, the ones who could no longer bear the ridicule were the knights.

She had said ‘Well then everyone, feel free to come at me anytime’.

Which meant—

“It’s not one on one? Even if you’re a princess of the Belzerg clan who are famous for being militants, aren’t you looking down on us too much?”

The man who seemed to be the leader of the knights, released a large amount of killing intent and stepped forth.

“That’s not what I intended... However, I’ll take as on as many opponents as needed. I am prepared for it anytime you see?”

The leader, who seemed to have bought into the provocation, didn’t wait for the starting signal, and raised his sword into the air— “‘Exterior’!”

Iris casually slashed forward. A moment later, the sword that was hoisted above the man’s head was cut apart and sent flying.

“...huh?”

Someone leaked out such an utter.

The knights, who had been laughing or angered a moment ago, all stood

silenced. The atmosphere in the training grounds came to a halt.

“Iris, if you make their swords unusable, then they can’t practice right? Look, there are practice swords with blunt edges over there. It’s fine if you use those.”

“Ah! You’re right. My apologies... Sorry, I broke your sword.”

Towards Iris, who apologized profusely, the man whose sword had been cut—

“Eh-!? N-, No. Uhm... I-, It’s fine, please don’t worry about it...”

Replied with an expression that showed that he hadn’t understood what happened.

Under the surprised gazes of everyone in the area, Iris leisurely walked to the wall, and picked up one of the practice swords that were hoisted against it.

“Well then everyone, please treat me well!”

She revealed a brilliant smile.

“—U-, Uhm, will you listen... to what I have to say?”

“Yes. Please tell.”

The unmoving, corpse-like bodies of the knight were scattered across the training ground.

At the center, of it all, sat the prince, who had become meek and obedient.

Iris, who didn’t break a single sweat after her rampage, showed a composed expression and thrust her practice sword into the ground. With a smile, she said to the prince.

“Thank you for being willing to listen to what I have to say! Well then...”

“Wait! I agreed to listen, but I never said that I would support you! Don’t get ahead of yourself!”

It was as though he was saying that it was a best-of-three after losing a game of rock-paper-scissors.

“Oi Iris, those knights are all unconscious, which means that there are no

witnesses. Let's take this chance and bury this guy alive."

"Hie-!??"

"W-, We can't do that onii-sama. If we do that then we won't be able to get the money!"

Rather than morals, Iris rejected my proposal over money.

It seems that my cute little sister has grown properly.

"...One-tenth."

Said the prince, as though he was groaning.

"Eh-?"

Hearing Iris' response, the prince vigorously rose his head and said.

"One-tenth! I'll give you one-tenth first. M-, Mhm. It's true that it would be a problem if we cut the support fees all at once. So we will continue to give one-tenth!"

"N-, No way! One-tenth is a bit..."

Seeing Iris' sorrow, the prince showed a triumphant expression, as though he felt that he had finally won once. He announced.

"For a country bumpkin you have entertained me quite well. Consider this a reward! If you desire more money, then satisfy me more!"

"I understand Well then, please bring some more knights here!"

"T-, That's not what I meant! Who said I was going to let you abuse my subordinates! I said for you to entertain me!"

Hearing Iris' unexpected response, the prince hurriedly corrected himself.

"To entertain.... W-, Well then, uhm, I'll give you my treasured taketon for a day..."

<TL Note: 'taketon' means 'bamboo dragonfly' (the one Kazuma gave her in vol 6). Much like Chirimendonya, this is gibberish to Iris, and is left as katakana in raw-text> "Are you making fun of me!? That has to be some sort of child's toy, right? That's not what I meant at all!"

With deep, audible, ragged breaths, the prince said to Iris.

“Tomorrow! Come here again tomorrow! I’ll prepare an opponent that will surprise you. If you win, then I will increase the budget again. Understood!?”

Saying that, he left the training ground—

—On our way home from the castle.

Iris lowered her head and murmured.

“Onii-sama, I only managed to get one-tenth back...”

Originally, through this meeting, she planned to restore the former amount, as well as request for additional funds for attacking.

However, the support funds were massively decreased instead, so she was feeling down.

It wasn’t Iris’ fault at all, but...

“What are you saying? We’re getting one-tenth a day. Then if we go at this pace every day, then after twenty days of threa-... asking him, then we will have two times the original amount. If we think about it this way, then you’ve achieved some amazing results haven’t you?”

I gave a makeshift response hoping to cheer her up. Hearing that, she rose her head and showed me a smile.

“Although I don’t think that it will be that simple, I feel much better. Onii-sama, please take care of me tomorrow as well.”

“Leave it to me. Rather, I’ll actually help you starting tomorrow, in a variety of ways.”

Like this—

From today onwards, Iris and I began our drop-in negotiations—

Part 2

“‘Exterior’!”

“Y-Y-Y-Y-, You’re kidding me right!?”

A shriek echoed through the training ground.

Of course, the shriek came from the prince.

“Fu, it seems that you misjudged my little sister’s strength. Something on the level of a mere griffon is obviously no match for Iris, right?”

“Y-, You, when you saw the griffon in the cage, weren’t you clamoring about how ‘this is underhanded and clearly against the rules’!”

Griffon.

With the body the size of a house, the flaps of its wings could sweep away adult horses and cows with no trouble. It was a giant monster that had the body of a lion, a pair of large wings, and the head of an eagle.

Although it wasn’t at the level of a dragon, it was still a dangerous opponent that a vast number of adventurers feared.

“I did it, onii-sama!”

“O-, Oh. As expected of my little sister. Well done.”

With a brilliant smile on her face, Iris lightly ran to where I was. While I was still slightly surprised, I praised her wholeheartedly.

“Uhm, prince Revi, then as per our agreement...”

“I-, I get it I get it! I will increase the support funding, so hurry up and put that sword away! Stop pointing its tip towards me!”

Hearing what the tearful prince said, Iris released an air of relief.

But, what the prince said next clouded her sunny smile.

“However, I am merely increasing it. Counting yesterday’s portion, the support funding adds up to one-and-a-half tenths. Now, that’s all for today...”

“No way! Please at least raise it to two-tenths!”

“Hie-, don’t point the tip at me... Oi, that’s too close! The point of the sword is pressing against my face! Are you trying to threaten me!?”

Iris, who had gotten worked up, reflexively drew her sword-arm closer to the prince. Well, it was hard to blame her.

“I’m not trying to threaten you, I just want to negotiate...”

“Then hurry up and put that sword away!”

Perhaps it was due to his pride as a member of royalty, but the crying prince didn’t falter despite the sword before his eyes.

I thought he was just a shitty brat, but unexpectedly, he might have more guts than I expected.

However, this prince looked down on us as country bumpkins.

If that’s the case—

“Then how about a match with me?”

I will strike his great pride.

“J-, Just who would continue to—”

“Oho? Don’t misunderstand me, alright? If you can’t even beat my little sister, then in a combat-type match against me – who has sent a countless number of demon king army generals to their graves – neither the countries’ knights nor a griffon are my equal. Ah, in that case, you might have no choice but to bring a dragon I guess.”

Hearing what I said, the prince gulped on his saliva. On the other hand, Iris, who understood the true extent of my abilities, looked at me with a gaze that screamed ‘what is this person saying!?’.

I’m somewhat hurt by that gaze, so please stop.

“The type of match I’m talking about is games. All said and done, you are the prince of the ‘great nation of casinos’. You like gambling right?”

When we returned home yesterday, Darkness told us information regarding this prince.

It seemed that this prince was extremely fond of games and gambling.

Rather, Elroad was a nation that was established entirely on casinos.

Thus, it should be a given that the descendants of its founders would take a liking to gambling.

“A game contest? If you win, I’ll increase the support funding. Is that what you mean?”

“Yep. After someone wins in a gambling contest, there’s something called ‘double-up’ right? Would you like to have a go at it with me?”

The prince understood my intentions almost immediately. Perhaps he had good apprehension abilities.

According to the information Darkness gathered, the prince was a sore loser.

Although she wasn’t really useful in terms of combat, she was unexpectedly proficient at simple tasks.

By the way, as for the remaining two, one of them had lost all their spare change at the casino, while the other had returned to the onion duck farm from yesterday, and used the spare change that Darkness gave her to experience the joys of hunting for survivors.

Since the two of them wouldn’t be useful in this situation, let’s just let them be for now.

After thinking for a brief moment, the prince nodded his head once.

“Alright, if I lose, then I will increase the support funding from one-and-a-half tenths to two-tenths. However, if you lose, then what will you pay me with?”

Crap, I forgot to think of my side of the deal.

Since their bet was a claim to the nation’s money, my bet will surely have to have some enormous value.

Something that matches to that description is....

“I understand, then how about this? If you win, then I will give you a ‘shoulder-massage’ ticket for my little sister”

“I will work hard!”

“Are you retarded!? Who would gratefully accept such a thing! If anything, it has to be money! Money! Give me money or something of equal value!”

It’s because I don’t have any that I’m trying to coax you into such a deal.

Then, Iris timidly retrieved something that seemed important from her pocket.

“Uhm, then if onii-sama loses, I will let you borrow this taketon for three days....”

“What are you trying to do with a toy like that!? As if I would want something like that!”

Ah, this is the bamboo-copter I gave her a while back.

She kept it as something important to her huh?”

“Ah that’s enough. How about the support funding going to zero if you guys lose? Not a decrease, but zero. To start with, I followed through with your selfishness under the name of ‘negotiation’, so a compromise of this extent is necessary. Regardless of whether you come everyday from now on, and regardless of how much funding you’ve accumulated, if you lose once, then everything returns to zero. How’s that, still want to do it?”

As if he was provoking us, the prince scornfully laughed at us.

I see, if we lose once then the prince will be able to get everything back.

Not a bad play if I say so myself.

—That is, if his opponents weren’t Iris and I.

“Alright, that’s fine. Then I will decide the contents of our match okay?”

Was it beyond his expectations for me to accept it so easily? The prince showed a shocked expression.

In front of the prince, I took out a coin from my purse.

After hiding my hands behind my back for a brief moment, I stretched my clenched fists towards the prince.

“The contents are extremely simple. Where is the hundred-eris coin hidden?”

“...Basically, it’s a pure gambling contest? Are you an idiot? It’s too late to go back on your word alright?”

Hearing the contents of the match, the prince looked at me with a pitying expression. Then, Iris suddenly said.

“Now that I think about it, onii-sama is someone with unparalleled luck isn’t he!? I see, if that’s the case...!”

“...What?”

A bead of sweat trickled from the prince’s forehead.

However, there was no way for him to call the match off at this point. He looked intently at my clenched fists for a brief while and...!

“This side... No, this side! I choose this fist!”

The prince pointed to my right fist.

Hearing that, Iris gathered her hands together, as though she was praying.

Seeing the broad grin form on my face, he opened his eyes in surprise.

“What a shame! You’re wrong!”

“Damnnnnnniiiiitttt!”

I opened the fist that the prince pointed towards, which was of course, empty.

“We did it onii-sama! With this, we have two-tenths! Two-tenths!”

Iris innocently celebrated. On the other hand, the prince showed a composed, fearless smile.

“Don’t get ahead of yourselves after a single win alright? Unlike you guys, all I need to do is to win once. Brace yourself for what’s coming tomorrow!”

Part 3

“Sacred · Lightning · Blare’!”

A white flash of lightning struck the center of the training ground.

The dazzling stream of light was accompanied by a violent torrent of wind.

““Hieeeeeeeee—!?””

At a corner of the training ground, the prince and I squatted down and shrieked.

After the intense roars settled, all that remained were large piles of stone.

This was probably the magic that the hero used during the fight with the last boss.

“I did it, onii-sama!”

Saying that, she ran towards me with a smile on her face.

Iris’ opponent today was a mob of golems.

The prince, who had determined that it would be pointless to have a one-on-one regardless of how mighty the monster he brought was, decided to force an advantage through numbers, but...

“Well done, as expected of my little sister. How’s that? Can you stop giving us these dull tasks already and give us the full aid?”

“You... Weren’t you shrieking together with me just a moment ago? That aside, if you want the support funding than you will need to keep winning. The current total is two-and-a-half tenths. Now then, what will you do? Do you still want to have a match with me today?”

In front of the prince, who showed a peerless smile, I wordlessly took out an eris coin.

“Hmpf, you have guts! I don’t know how good your luck is, but I am a member of Elroad’s royalty, whom have garnered their fortune from casinos. Just how

long do you think you'll be able to keep winning?"

Listening to the prince, I wordlessly flicked the coin into the air.

And then I swiftly caught it, and put my hands behind my back—

"—Now then, we've recovered three-tenths of the funds. At this rate, we'll return to our original rate within the week."

"...Should I say 'as expected'? How should I say this...? Is your powerful luck really something that can't be used for the sake of the world at this point?"

During our dinner, I, who had won against the prince once again, talked about what happened today.

"Kazuma-san Kazuma-san. Could you accompany me tomorrow? Come with me to the casino please. For just tomorrow only, I will call you Kazuma-sama ok?"

"No way. Anyhow, didn't you gamble away all your spare change yesterday? So what exactly did you do today?"

Yes. This girl, despite having just arrived to this town, had already spent all the allowance that Darkness had given her.

Yet, she boastfully showed a heavy-looking purse to me.

"I went to the adventurer's guild today. Iris subjugated a lot of monsters while we were on our way here right? I, the wise and cunning Aqua, gathered the expensive parts of the monsters you see?"

"So all you did was sell the parts of the monsters that Iris defeated huh. Oi, I won't tell you to hand over everything, but give half of it to Iris."

As I gestured to take the purse from her, she immediately pressed the purse to her stomach and entered a defensive ball curl.

"Uhm, onii-sama. Since I'm not an adventurer, I'm unable to sell monster-ingredients for money. So it doesn't bother me..."

"It's fine Iris. If you spoil this girl, she'll try to push her luck."

Realizing that her purse would be confiscated at this rate, Aqua hurriedly

entered a battle stance. As she and I faced each other, Megumin butted in— “I will look after Aqua tomorrow, ok? If we leave her alone she might rack up a debt at the casino.”

Well, if it’s Megumin we’re talking about then she wouldn’t become a gambling-addict, unlike Aqua.

“I don’t have anything more to investigate. So what should I do tomorrow?”

Hearing that, Aqua showed a ‘eureka!’ expression, and snuggled up to Darkness.”

“Hey Darkness, if that’s the case, come with me tomorrow. As your senpai in casinos, I will teach you everything there is to know.”

“...You’re not trying to coax me into giving you more allowance are you?”

It seems like she was.

Leaving Aqua, who puffed her cheeks and showed her will to protest, alone—

“Anyway, leave the support funds to us. At this rate, we’ll be plucking the prince dry.

Iris and I exchanged a nod, and thus, the task of babysitting Aqua was shoved to Darkness, who seemed somewhat unwilling to take it up.

From there on—

“What a shame! You’re wrong!”

“Whyyyyyyyyyyyy!”

Iris and I had been coming to the castle in the name of ‘negotiation’ for a week now.

Since no opponent that could match Iris could be found, she was kept out of the matches entirely. Thus, the matches with the funding at stake were entirely left up to me.

In exchange, the number of gambles had increased to two a day. The gamble of ‘guessing the location of the coin’ was rather simple, but because it was so simple, it pushed the sore-loser attitude of the prince further than ever.

“We did it onii-sama, with this, the defense funding has been entirely restored! After that, is the offense funding that I had originally intended to request...”

“W-, Wait wait! That funding is a big ‘no’. Leaving the continuation of the defense funding aside, if we provide funds that are used to attack the demon king army, then a variety of problems will arise.”

I thought that the prince would continue to have these matches against us, but he seemed to be an unexpectedly prudent person.

“Oi, are you fine with losing to me like this? As the prince of the great nation of casinos, Elroad, are you fine with getting smashed by someone made fun of as a ‘country-bumpkin’ in a gambling contest? Are you really just going to accept this?”

I desperately provoked the prince, but all he did was chuckle to himself.

“Like I would fall for such an obvious taunt. The reason I accepted these matches was because nothing would really change even if I lost to you. If I win, then I’ll be able to publicly announce the cutting of funding for a just cause. However, my nation does not want to agitate the demon king army. Thus, we will not provide any funding that is used for the sake of attacking.”

Unexpectedly, this guy might not just be a simple-minded idiot prince.

It can’t be helped then, I’ll have to disclose the secret.

“Are you really sure? Perhaps you might win next time?”

“How heavy-handed of you. Having lost this many times already, do you believe that I honestly think that I still have a chance of winning? Who do you think I am? I’m the prince of the great nation of casinos you... know...?”

The prince’s calm expression became dumbfounded, and his mouth swung wide open.

He stared at my open, right hand.

By the way, the prince’s wrong guess just now was my left hand.

“Onii-sama, could it be that from the first match, the coin was in neither of your hands?”

Although it wasn't quite to the extent of the prince, Iris also showed a surprised expression.

"Yeah. My clever little sister, you still remember what I said when I suggested this match right?"

"What you said? Erm... 'The contents are extremely simple. Where is hundred-eris coin hidden?' right? ...Ah-!"

"Ahh-!"

Following Iris, the prince also realized it.

"Yes, when we first started I said 'guess where it's hidden' didn't I? I never said to guess 'which hand it was in'. I simply asked where the coin was. And the crucial point is that the coin was hidden in my back pocket!"

"Wah! As expected of onii-sama! There's no one that's better you at doing sly things like this!"

Towards Iris, whose eyes glimmered, I instinctively replied.

"You're praising me, right?"

"Mhm, I'm praising you."

After saying that Iris began to giggle to herself. As I was doubting her, thinking that 'there's no way she's praising me' — "Y-, You dirty dirty dirty bastard! To think that you dare would use such tricks against me! Do you have no shame as a member of royalty!?"

"Not at all."

I mean, I'm not a member of royalty anyway.

Seeing my reaction, the prince rudely said.

"...Ku-, this is why country-bumpkins are—! Well fine, despite being the prince of the great nation of casinos, I was foolish to have not seen through your trick. I wouldn't ask you to return the money."

In the end, the prince didn't fall for my provocation.

"It's pointless to try to provoke me any further. My nation will continue to provide the defense funding, however, we will not increase it. This is absolute..."

To be precise, the one who called for the funding to be ceased was Ragcraft you see? The only reason I accepted it was because I didn't want to be wedded to some country-girl. Well, it's a shame that I didn't win in the end, but I had a lot of fun."

The prince, who said that without consideration for the other party—

"Well then, this is goodbye. I'll be praying for you guys to beat the demon king alright?"

As though this was an unexpected and sudden parting for him, the prince urged for us to leave.

"—So, that said, I want to let that shitty brat go through some painful experiences."

"Alright, well said Kazuma. As if I would just let Elroad, who can't do anything but earn money, look down on my nation of Belzerg! I'll beat that little kid to death for making a fool of Iris-sama!"

After returning to the hotel, Iris holed up in her room, feeling down from the results. Unbeknownst to her, I held a discussion with Darkness' group.

"I have no complaints of course. Mm, it doesn't matter if it's attacking the castle or anything else, just leave it to me. Even if it's just an underling, my comrade has been made fun of. A crimson magic clansman will not stand by and watch while such a thing happens."

"I don't really know what's happening, but I got the monster ingredients from Iris, so as long as it isn't anything scary, I'll help you guys out, ok?"

Amongst them, two were unusually motivated. As for the odd-one out, I wasn't sure whether she was motivated or not. Towards them— "That shitty brat, I'll make sure he regrets having ever looked down on me...!"

I had formulated a plan a long time ago, for if by some chance we were be unable to obtain the support funding. Now was the time to bring it to fruition—

Part 4

—In the morning, the sunlight shimmered through the windows.

The warm and gentle light brightened the dim room.

During this pleasant daybreak, our moods were rock-bottom.

“Hey let us out! What’s our crime!? Tell us what our crime is! This arrest is unjustified!”



Since this morning, Aqua had been shouting whilst banging on the prison bars.

Yes, we were currently imprisoned.

Having thought that my plan was perfect, I'd never expected that it would fail.

Right now, all of us had our equipment confiscated, and were locked into a prison at the police station.

The station was constructed from stone, but for the current season, it was unexpectedly warm.

The prison cell was mostly made of stone as well. Inside the room that was sealed with metal bars, were a set of chains used to hold down rowdy prisoners, and a rather crude-looking toilet.

For some reason, Darkness sat still in the prison cell with a flushed face. The bothering part was that she stared intently at the chains without even the slightest movement.

In response to Aqua, the expression of the guard, who sat sitting outside the prison cell doing paperwork, stiffened.

"Y-, You're asking about your crime...? I never thought that you would say something so shameless, but... Late at night, you guys used some great magic that caused a thunderous roaring sound. Did you really think that no one would be angry?"

Megumin grasped the bars of the room with her arms, and said.

"In the town I live in, I was simply warned that 'the terrain near the town might change, so please do it somewhere further away'. Isn't this just the first time I've released the magic near this town? The people in this nation are really narrow-minded aren't they?"

"You idiot-! If you really want to point fingers, then it's obviously just the people in your nation that are strange! The people in this town thought that a war started and practically sprang from their beds you know!?"

The guard had a point.

"The inspector will arrive in a short moment. If you have anything to say please tell them instead. Well, releasing magic in the middle of the night and waking up all the citizens is not really a severe crime. You guys will probably just be fined, so

just act mature and don't cause any more trouble."

After hearing what the guard said, we didn't say anything more, and obediently waited the prison cell.

—Yesterday night, as everyone else was sleeping, we snuck past the guards of the gate, and stealthily exited the town.

At first, I thought that it would be fine to cause a bit of trouble at the castle, so I entrusted them with the task of creating a distraction outside town.

But then, Megumin suddenly said that, 'If there's a small hill, it's possible to cast an explosion magic that could be heard throughout town. Trust me, I'm used to this.' Although what the last part was a mystery to me, I decided to follow through with it.

When they released the magic outside town, I would take advantage of the chaos and infiltrate the castle.

After getting into the prince's sleeping chamber, I would leave a knife and letter at his bedside.

Written on the letter would be:

'Foolish humans, you think that I would overlook you if you announce neutrality? After I dispose of that annoying Belzerg nation, you're next!'

...And such.

We would forge the impression that the demon king army would not accept their neutrality, and force them to come to our side.

It was a thorough and flawless plan to create a wholly staged crisis.

Then, they would probably feel a sense of danger, and may even decide to work with us...

That's what I thought would happen, but—

Shortly past daybreak, when the sounds of human activity could be heard from our cell, that woman appeared.

With a precisely fitting attire and orderly facial features, she gave the

impression of being a keen and capable person. To add onto that, she tied her red hair into a ponytail, and looked at us with a sharp gaze.

She reminded me of the inspector back in Axel named Sena.

That person had the same scary image, but I wonder if she was doing well right now?

According to some rumors, after resolving a certain incident, she had returned to Axel as the capital's inspector.

The woman hung her coat on the wall behind her, brewed something that appeared to be black tea, and glanced at us from behind the prison bars. She then wordlessly turned her eyes to the prison guard.

She probably wanted to ask, 'Is it these guys?'.

"Since someone used explosion magic on the outskirts of town, I quickly rushed to the scene, but when I arrived I found these people being chased by a large mob of undead. As they had left town at that time of day, and decided to use explosion magic to subjugate undead, I decided to arrest them. The report is over there."

After smoothly answering the woman's silent question, the guard pointed to the documents on the desk.

On top of the carpet outside the cell, was a table, stool, and sofa.

Even if this was a detention facility, I couldn't actually make the connection.

Having seemingly noticed our gazes, the inspector took a sip from her black tea, and said.

"This is the nation of Elroad that has flourished from casinos, and it's not a place that has many particularly villainous criminals. This building in particular is a something like a protection facility for those who are so broke that they have no place to stay or for drunken tourists. A facility that makes sure that such people wouldn't die from the cold... Now then, let's have you speak one by one."

She looked coldly at us as she said that.

Perhaps she had some sort of intention, but she decided to question us in front of the cell.

Instead of bringing us to a small room, the questioning took place at the table that was placed on top of the carpet.

The guard would stand behind the person that was being questioned, so that the person could be held down if they tried to do anything funny.

It seems that the questioning was set to begin at this very moment. Usually speaking, wouldn't it be better to question us one by one in a secluded space, so that we would be able to collude our testimonies? That's what I thought, but...

My questions were immediately answered by the familiar item the inspector brought out.

"Well then, let's hear what you have to say shall we? ...By the way, there is a magic tool here that rings if anyone is lying... As a result, it's pointless for you to collude your testimonies."

Saying that, she took out a small bell on top of the table.

She joined her fingers together, and looked sharply at the person in front of her.

"...Hmpf, for whatever it's worth, I'm still a crusader. In the name of the goddess Eris, I swear that I will not lie."

...Somehow, Darkness' face was flushed red, and her eyes shined with high expectations.

In response to Darkness, the inspector merely murmured 'as you wish'.

Looking through the documents, she said.

"Your job is 'crusader', and you are a believer of the Eris cult... Now then, first, what is your name..."

"I choose to stay silent."

Darkness decisively stated such.

"...Huh?"

The inspector reflexively rose her face, and looked at Darkness dubiously.

"I said that I choose to stay silent. If you wish to know my name, feel free to torture or interrogate me as you please! However, in the name of the prestigious

house Dustiness, I swear that I will not speak easily!”

“Dustiness-san was it? ...Erm, we wouldn’t torture or interrogate you, ok? In a world where there is magic to decipher the truth, those are outdated methods. Please rest assured... House Dustiness... That famous house Dustiness? ...It can’t be... However, the bell didn’t ring...?”

The inspector looked suspiciously on the bell, and murmured to herself.

...Would it be better if I explained the situation alone?

Having already foreseen the events that would unfold in the near future, I started to feel sorry for the inspector.

“Now then Dustiness-san, why did you go to that sort of place to cast that magic?”

“I choose to stay silent. If you wish for me to speak, feel free to use brute force.”

Darkness continued to stubbornly refuse.

Just how troublesome and annoying was this person planning to be?

“...If you choose to stay silent, then I shall assume that there is some crime you are guilty of, you know? I said that I wouldn’t use such outdated methods, but I have the tools to do so. However, I do not feel like using them. Please rest assured, your sentence will be light, so please don’t be stubborn and be forthcoming with me instead. For your information, if I judge that suspects are withholding important information, then I am permitted to use torture. I would recommend that you don’t act rashly...”

“Just as I like it! Rather, come at me with the most intense methods you can!”

Seeing Darkness lean across the table excitedly in response to what she said, the inspector retreated backwards with a stiff expression.

And then, she looked at the bell on the table.

...Of course, it didn’t ring.

Confirming that the bell hadn’t rung, the inspectors’ expression stiffened even more.

“...Uhm, that’s enough... next please!”

“—What is this... A situation where I’m captured and subjected to interrogation and torture... Even though it’s a situation that probably won’t happen another time in my lifetime... To think that it would come to an end so quickly...”

“You, don’t make others feel troubled because of your fetish.”

As Megumin was called to the table, Darkness returned to the cell with a downtrodden expression.

It pained for me to see the inspector’s somewhat exhausted expression.

Once Megumin sat down, the inspector recomposed herself and put forth a stern expression. Again, she placed her hands on the table and crossed her fingers together.

“...Now then, you are the person that casted the magic correct? And if I’m not wrong, your job is ‘archwizard’ right? Now then, first, let’s hear your name.”

“I am Megumin.”

The inspector maintained her stern expression.

“...What did you say?”

“I am Megumin.”

Hearing what Megumin said, the inspector instinctively looked at the bell.

...Of course, it didn’t ring.

Seeing the inspector’s movements, Megumin—

“Oi, if you have any problems with my name, let’s hear it, shall we?”

“N-, No! Please excuse my disrespectful behavior.”

The inspector hurried recomposed herself.

“Now then, why did you case that disruptive magic in the middle of the night?”

“I have the duty of ‘one day, one explosion’. Back in Axel, I would cast it as though I was releasing fireworks.”

Hearing what Megumin said, the inspector froze.

As should be expected of her, she turned her eyes towards the bell. Of course, it didn't ring.

Although Megumin hadn't answered her question, the inspector seemed to be curious about what she had meant by 'one day, one explosion'.

"...What will happen if you are unable to perform this 'one day, one explosion' duty you speak of?"

"I don't even want to think about it. Should it ever come to that, I suppose that 'KABOOM' will happen."

What do you mean by 'KABOOM'?

The inspector seemed to be thinking the same thing. She looked at the bell that hadn't rung, and softly grunted.

More importantly, why didn't the bell ring?

Could it be that 'KABOOM' will really happen??"

"Let's change the question. Regarding the casting of explosion magic in the middle of the night, what do you think of it? Don't you think that it is a crime in any way?"

"Not at all, because I believe that there is no doubt that I was a god of destruction in my last life. As a result, destructive activities are wholly justified."

The Inspector turned her eyes away from Megumin, who began to ramble about incomprehensible things, and looked at the bell.

Of course, it didn't ring.

...Could it be that the bell's broken?

"Hey Aqua, you are fascinatingly beautiful today."

"Hm hm, what's up with you all of a sudden? What's wrong with you, Kazuma? Could it be that when we were getting hit on a while back, you were actually jealous..."

Chiring.

Before Aqua could finish, the bell on the table rung.

“...Please do not obstruct the questioning.”

“Sorry, I was just wondering whether the bell was broken or not.... Ow-! Oi stop, what are you doing? I praised you so why are you strangling me! To start with, a while back, to test whether or not the bell was broken or not, didn't you do the same thing to me?”

As I tried to undo Aqua's hold, the inspector, who seemed to be a bit relieved that the bell rung for once— “Let me ask you one more time. Why did you cast explosion magic in the middle of the night?”

She asked Megumin with a softer attitude.

“Because that is the meaning of my life.”

Hearing that, the inspector flinched.

As should be expected of her, she once again turned her eyes to the bell...

“.....Erm, next please...”

Seeing that the bell didn't ring, she lowered her shoulders in exhaustion. She seemed to be getting fed up.

“—My name is Aqua, ok? I'm something like a manager or guardian for those three over there alright?”

Hearing what Aqua said, the three of us in the cell looked intently at her.

The be precise, we looked intently at the lie-detection bell placed in front of her.

“Aqua-san... yes? You have the same name as the goddess of water.”

For some reason, the bell didn't ring.

...Huhhhh—

“Hey, why didn't that magic tool ring?”

“As long as the person themselves believes deeply in it, then it's not a lie. When Megumin said those strange things, the bell didn't ring right?”

“Oi, what do you mean by ‘strange things’, let’s hear it shall we?”

If it was as Darkness said, then does it mean that that idiot deeply believes that she’s our guardian?

If that’s the case, I want to slap her hard.

“Let’s hear it then. For what reason were you at such a place at such a time?”

“That’s because that man over there named Kazuma is in heat all year round. There was no other way to make sure that he wouldn’t start creeping into girl’s beds at night, so to rest assured, we brought him there.”

This little shit, was this payback for my lie that I used to cause the bell to ring?

Rather, she said that she was our guardian a while ago. If it was as Darkness said, then did she really believe deeply in such a thing? To be honest, I think that it’s actually because this girl’s mind’s default setting was on ‘weird’, but...

The inspector reflexively looked at the bell, but once again, for whatever reason, it didn’t ring.

Seeing that, the inspector looked at me with disdain.

...Y-, You’re mistaken.

However, is that bell really, really not broken?

“Erm, well then... From your perspective, why did your group cast explosion magic in the middle of the night..?”

“In order to protect the town from an incoming mob of monsters! Yes, together with those three, I, the great Aqua have protected the town!”

Despite how blatant of a lie she was telling, the bell – as expected now – did not ring.

Seeing that, the inspector seemed to grow increasingly weaker.

“...It seems that... you weren’t lying. What is this... You protected this town? You say...?”

The inspector’s expression quickly turned an apologetic one, and she looked at Aqua sincerely.

Correcting her posture, she looked Aqua straight in the eye and said.

“As the representative of this town, allow me to express my thanks. You are Aqua-san yes? And your job is ‘archpriest’ correct?”

Hearing what the inspector said, Aqua suddenly rose from her seat.

And then...!

“Fufu-, ‘archpriest’ is just a front! There is no need for me to hide it anymore. I am none other than the one and only goddess of water! Yes, the goddess Aqua, that is who I am!”

Hearing that, not only the inspector and us, even the guard turned to look at the bell.

...It didn’t ring.

Seeing that, the inspector sighed, and murmured to herself.

“Ah, so it’s just broken hm...”

“Why would you say that—!”

Aqua, who began to act violently, was pressed down by the guard, and returned to the cell.

The inspector, who had listened to the testimonies of the three, ordered the guard to bring the magic tool somewhere, and rubbed her eyes in exhaustion.

...I feel sorry for her.

Empathizing with the inspector, I turned to Aqua, and whispered to her.

“Oi, why didn’t the bell ring? Do you have some sort of convenient magic?”

In response, Aqua said.

“That bell can detect the evil intent of people when they lie, and well, I’m a goddess you know? There’s no way I would generate evil intent by lying just a little, right? Even if it does happen, my radiant, divine aura will immediately dissipate it. If it’s going to detect it, I suppose it has to be a huge lie that I absolutely don’t believe in, and that goes against my very morals to say.”

She said that in a casual manner.

Occasionally, she displays the abilities of a goddess doesn't she?

For better or worse.

"...Hm? That means it won't react unless it's a huge lie that goes against your will? A while back at the mansion, the bell reacted when you praised me didn't it? Which basically means that..."

"Then, last person... please."

As I was about to question Aqua about what happened then, I was ushered out of my cell, and brought in front of the exhausted sounding, pitiful inspector.

"—My utmost apologies! I never thought that you were related to the famous houses of Dustiness and Shinfornea!"

Before me, the inspector's attitude completely softened up.

On my neck hung the pendants that Darkness and Claire entrusted me with.

Having seen that, the inspector continued to earnestly apologize to me.

"Well well, the fact that we had released explosion magic in the middle of the night is an unmistakable truth. However... you see? There is an inexplicable reason for doing that. I mean, my nation and your nation are allied and friendly nations right? We've come here in secret, so I would like for this not to become a big incident..."

"Yes, I understand. I fully understand! If this gets out of hand then it will become a problem of foreign affairs! I will not ask for you too deeply for your reason!"

As expected of the authority of nobility.

To think that it would cause the inspector to clammer up immediately, I've truly gained a wonderful tool.

"Well then, are we free to go home?"

Hearing what I said, the inspector showed a relieved smile.

The inspector even went as far as to see us off at the station's main entrance.

It was then—

“Uhm—, about this faulty magic tool, I couldn’t find anything wrong with it, you know? Well, I switched it out just in case but... Oi, we switched this one out, so put this in the storage for me.”

The guard whispered to the inspector, and called for another guard.

Then, the inspector tilted her head in puzzlement.

However, how could she say that Aqua was a goddess...?

As I was considering such things, the inspector glanced at me.

“... I just wanted to ask, but about the what the blue-haired girl over there said earlier, are you so in heat that you would crawl into girls’ beds at night if those girls put their eyes off of you...”

“It’s just a lie! Of course all of it was a complete lie!”

Despite my reply, the inspector slightly distanced herself from me.

“I-, Is that so? Well in any case, I wouldn’t say anything, so...”

Overhearing my conversation with the inspector, Darkness patted me on the shoulder.

“U-, Uhm... We believe in you. We believe that even if we were alone and defenseless, you wouldn’t try to do anything to us. Isn’t that good enough?”

Chiring.

After Darkness said that, something rang inside the building.

Hearing that, the inspector took another step back.

“No one would think that Kazuma would do such a thing. When Kazuma is on watch-duty, I’ve never done anything like sleep lightly as a precaution.”

Chiring.

...The inspector wordlessly took another step back.

And then, a certain person that just couldn’t read the mood clenched her fist and...!

No wait, it should be fine. As long as it wasn’t a huge lie that she’ll feel

ashamed of, she won't generate any evil intent...

"I believe. I believe in him, ok!? Kazuma is not a pervert in the least, and has never crawled into Darkness' bed at night! I honestly believe that he is a truly kind hearted and extremely sensitive man, ok!? The things that I said back then were all lies!"

Chiring, Chiring, Chiring, Chiring—

"Chiring Chiring Chiring Chiring shut up! So that's how you perceive me you bastards! But I have some self-consciousness and I've reflected on it already, so please don't say anything more! I'm very sorry!"

Part 5

Returning to the hotel, we noticed Iris sitting there waiting for us, with tears in her eyes.

“Onii-sama, thank god you’re safe! When I heard that everyone was arrested, I thought that there might be no choice but for me to break through the prison, even if it means starting a war...”

“Wait, calm down. It’s fine now, we weren’t mistreated at all!”

After a while, the princess-sama that said some dangerous things, finally calmed down and recomposed herself.

“Well then, why was onii-sama’s group arrested? The hotel employees told me about that you were arrested, but never told me why...”

Although we had decided to do this against her knowledge, Iris, who was clever-minded with sharp-instincts, would quickly figure this out even if we tried to keep it a secret.

After we explained what happened, Iris buried her face in her knees, and sat still.

Darkness, who seemed like she wanted to plead for forgiveness, timidly stretched her hand towards Iris.

“I-, Iris-sama...? Uhm, please forgive me for acting on my own with Kazuma. However, we had good intentions...”

“...-thetic”

Without answering Darkness, Iris murmured something.

“...Iris-sama?”

Darkness asked again.

“...Pathetic.”

This time, Iris said that one word in a voice that we could hear.

Hearing that, Darkness, without a trace of her usual idiotic attitude, knelt

down before Iris and lowered her head.

“I’m very sorry Iris-sama, this incident is a result of my lack of virtue. Please...”

Then, Iris raised her hand to interrupt Darkness.

“I said that I’m pathetic. I didn’t do much during our negotiations, and left most of it to onii-sama... And then when my request for additional funds was rejected, all I did was hole up in my room and sulk. Even though I haven’t done anything...”

No, Iris had done enough.

Rather, if Iris wasn’t strong to this extent, I wouldn’t be have been able to force the prince into gambling matches.

Iris, who didn’t know how I felt, shook her head and said.

“While I was busy sulking, Lalatina and onii-sama exerted yourselves and tried your best, even though that it was I that was supposed to do.”

No, it was wrong for the princess of a nation to say that.

However, I won’t rebut Iris with such an unpolished straight-man act.

Then, Iris picked up the sword that was hoisted on the wall, and said to Darkness, who kneeled on the floor.

“Dustiness Ford Lalatina, I will now go visit the castle. Please come with me.”

“Iris-sama?”

Darkness, who was suddenly called by her full name, rose her head in surprise.

Seeing Iris’ expression, Darkness’ face flushed red, and she lowered her head as though she were a true knight.

“From there, I will appeal to prince Revi for additional funds. Yes...”

This wasn’t the Iris that I had first met.

Nor was this the Iris that I knew, who smiled, who got angry, who was curious about everything.

“In the name of the descendants of the hero, Belzerg, I will do whatever it takes, and whatever I must to complete this task!”

“As expected of Iris-sama! I, Lalatina, will protect you regardless of what happens!”

The person who stood there was undoubtedly a descendant of the hero.

During the prelude to war, her blue eyes shined radiantly with fighting spirit.

There stood the militant princess.

—On the street leading to the castle.

Seeing Iris’ grand appearance as she tread towards the castle, the people on the street naturally moved to the side.

“Oi Kazuma, how do you like today’s ‘Iris-sama’! Ah, to see the gallant appearance of the master that I serve... As a noble that protects my nation, nothing could make me happier!”

Darkness, who began to mutter things akin to the white-suited lady that loved Iris, Claire, tread half a pace behind Iris. Her breath was ragged, but in a matter that was different from usual.

“It’s true that today’s Iris is really cool, but your depraved condition is completely cancelling it out. If you still consider yourself a follower, then please act a bit sharper.”

Darkness gritted her teeth in frustration at my straight-man rebuttal, but at the very least, she seemed to have a bit of self-conscience. She quickly relaxed her expression and composed herself.

“Rather, what is Iris planning to do? She said that she would do whatever it takes, but does she mean that? You know, charge straight in and raid the treasury?”

“What are you saying, you imbecile!? Iris would never do such a thing! ...If we’re talking about ‘any methods’, there are a few ways. Rather, when Belzerg was first established, and when there wasn’t enough money, there was something that they would often do...”

If there was such a method, then tell me sooner. Geez.

As I was about to say that—

“What are you here for, princess Iris? The prince has commanded that ‘from henceforth, princess Iris and her subjects are not to be allowed into the castle’, so please...”

“‘Exterior’!”

Ignoring the soldier that tried to stop her, she slashed towards the closed castle gates, without leaving so much as a moment to question her motives.

The sturdy-looking gate was cut apart in a single strike, and – accompanied by the sound of crashing metal – it collapsed.

“Princess Iris? W-, What are you doing all of a sudden...!”

Ignoring the perplexed soldier once again, Iris tread forward with heavy steps.

The gate guard, knowing that he was unable to stop her alone, took the whistle that hung from his neck and— “Hyuuuuuu—!”

The high pitched noise of the whistle rung through the castle.

—The path leading to the audience room was buried under the unconscious bodies of knights and soldiers.

The groans of those that had been struck by the body of her sword came from every direction.

“Y-Y-Y-Y-, You realize what the consequences of doing this are, right!?”

The teary-eyed prince, faced with Iris whose sword was unsheathed, tried his best to put up a strong front.

I leaned towards Darkness, and whispered into her ear.

“Hey, I said this on our way here, but we’re not really needed here, are we?”

“S-, Shut up, be quiet! We’re just getting to the good part!”

Perhaps she was conscious about it as well. Her face flushed slightly as she

replied.

Aqua, who had followed closely behind, slowly drew away from Iris after seeing her violent acts.

“Hey Kazuma, I’m starting to get worried about Emperor Zell, so I want to go home. I’m sure that that child is crying right now because it can’t see me.”

“I’m pretty sure it forgot about you after taking three steps, so don’t stress about it, ok?”

I grabbed onto Aqua’s hagoromo, and pulled her back.

Whilst we were doing that, the prince’s mood seemed to heat up.

“Oi, are you listening, you country-bumpkin!? Since you’ve done such a thing, you’re basically asking for a war between our nations aren’t you!? The other nations that support you will not stay silent you know!? This is a huge foreign affairs prob...!”

“Prince Revi”

With single call from Iris, the boisterous prince became as silent as the surface of still water.

The prime minister’s expression stiffened, and he, who was standing directly behind the prince, took several steps back.

“I’m only here to have a discussion with you. I apologize for my violent behavior, but as you have said so yourself, my nation is a barbaric one. This is something that is done by an impolite country-bumpkin like myself, so would you please turn a blind eye towards it?”

“Wh-... As if I would excuse such an idiotic...!”

As the prince was about to lose himself to rage—

“If you refuse to excuse it, then—”

From behind us, came a calm voice.

Her eyes shining red, and her staff in hand, she took a large step forward.

“With my explosion magic and Iris’ sword, we will destroy this nation—”

“W-W-W-, What did you say!?”

“Megumin-san, please don’t interrupt and say such superfluous things! That is not my intention!”

Pushing Megumin, who wanted to steal her thunder back, Iris, whose momentum had been killed, lightly blushed.

“Then what do you want from me!? If you want to ask additional funds, even if you threaten me...!”

Even when pressed to a corner, the prince did not back down.

“During the establishment of my nation, Belzerg, this is something that the royal family would often do when we didn’t have enough funds...”

Iris thrust her sword into the ground of the audience room..

“Please tell me about the strongest, most harmful monster in this nation.”

Looking the perplexed prince straight in the eye—

“I, Belzerg Stylish Sword Iris, will eradicate it without fail.”

She showed a sweet smile.

Chapter 5: Ending this pointless conspiracy!

Part 1

Dragon.

Amongst the people of this world, and even on earth where they supposedly didn't exist, there was not a single person who did not know of the most renowned monster.

So to speak, they were the strongest, greatest, and most fearsome existence.

The one who defeated it would be given the title of a hero, and could receive any reward that they desired. Such was this monster of extremes.

About this creature that was called the king of monsters, right now we—

“Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo! Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!
Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!”

“Quit being noisy and shut it! Our opponent can actually be called an opponent this time around! So even if it's someone like you, we still need you around!”

Yes, we were headed to defeat a dragon.

—About that, we need to return back to the time where Iris gallantly announced that she would eradicate a monster.

“You say that you will eradicate the most harmful monster to this nation? The strongest, mightiest monster? Don't joke around! I know how strong you are, but isn't it obvious that it's impossible!?”

Towards the worked-up prince that spat out these words, Iris tilted her head.

“It's not a problem if I can't do it, is it? I have decided to go defeat this monster on my own, so it's not a problem even if I die in the process. I will leave a message before I go so...”

“That’s not what I’m talking about! Even if it’s someone like you, since we’ve held a few conversations before, it would leave a bad taste in my mouth if you die! Don’t go and commit suicide!”

Hearing Iris’ response, the prince shouted, red-faced.

He was an idiot, but in any case, it didn’t seem like he was a bad person at heart.

“Fu, what is there to be afraid of? It might be hard for Iris to face such a powerful monster on her own, but I, Axel’s number one greatest magician, am here as well. Now Iris, let’s go and rout the monster that harms this nation, shall we?”

“You...-! I’m saying this because you guys have no idea what you’re heading into! Listen, in any case, the ones that brings the greatest amount of damage is the monster living in the gold mine. However, that is-...”

“Please wait.”

The prince, who was about to answer Megumin, was suddenly interrupted by the prime minister.

“Revi-sama, why don’t we let them try? They have stated their desire to do so themselves. Furthermore, if ‘that’ living in the gold mine is eradicated, then we’ll profit from it. Certainly, we must stop the unskilled adventurers and knights from stimulating it, but Iris-sama is a member of the Belzerg clan that inherits the hero’s blood through their veins. In any case, it seems that she will not back down so easily.”

Seeing this situation unfold, the prime minister sneered. Just what did he find so interesting with this situation?

Hearing that, the prince, as if to hide his displeasure—

“...Do whatever you like!”

Said that, and turned his face away—

<Important Note: For the rest of this chapter, keep in mind that a mine is an area spread across a mountain, and that when ‘mine’ is referred to, it’s actually across an open area’>

“—Isn’t trying to subjugate a dragon stupid? Hey, it is stupid, right? Are you all stupid?”

“Shut up and just let it go already. There’s no other way, you see? Also, isn’t it about time we got the achievement of being ‘dragon slayers’ as well? I mean, we’ve already fought against demon king army generals and an evil god, so at this point a dragon isn’t really that much is it?”

To this nation who primarily profited from casinos and businesses, it probably wasn’t necessary for them to take the risk of losing their adventurer’s lives just to reclaim a gold mine that was inhabited by a dragon.

However, for us, who needed this important flow of income, it was an opponent that we had to challenge.

“To be fair, aren’t you raising a dragon as a pet anyway? So what is there to be afraid of at this point? Could it be that you’ll abandon Emperor Zell when it grows up?”

“Please don’t compare my clever child, Emperor Zell, to the likes of the dragon here. That child is very smart, so it won’t attack people you know? And I mean, a wild dragon is basically a retarded lizard right?”

To be called retarded by this girl... I can’t help but feel sorry for the dragon.

If I remember correctly, didn’t dragons have a high intelligence stat?

“Aqua-sama, I will protect everyone, so I will need your help in turn. Since the opponent is a dragon, without your support magic, I think it will be rather tough...”

Said Iris apologetically. It seems that even Aqua couldn’t resist the urging of someone younger than her, but...

“...Geez, I guess it can’t be helped then. I will help you out, so when you grow up and become the queen someday, make the Axis cult the state religion please.”

“Who would allow such a chaotic thing!? Rather, think of it as a blessing if the Axis cult isn’t completely destroyed instead!”

As Aqua and I were noisily fighting, Iris suddenly giggled.

Then realizing our gazes, she hurried shook her hand.

“Ah, don’t misunderstand! I’ve always dreamed of doing adventurer-like things like this, and I was just really happy that we we’re like an adventurer party right now...”

Said Iris embarrassedly. Now that I think about it, when I switched bodies with this girl, she seemed to be happy that she ‘became an adventurer’.

Seeing Iris, Megumin ‘fu fu’-ed to herself and said cockily.

“Geez, we’re not playing around, you know? As a sheltered princess, you can’t be so simple and naïve... Alright, since you are my underling, I will teach you the basics of being an adventurer.”

“Yes, please take care of me!”

Seeing them getting along, Darkness reflexively smiled. Then, Megumin began to explain to Iris.

“...Hmpf, Iris, please look at that. The branches of that tree are broken, right? There’s a high chance that a monster did that not too long ago.”

“No, my ‘Enemy Detect’ skill isn’t picking anything up, so there probably aren’t any around.”

As I told them that, Megumin turned and glanced at me.

Finally recomposing herself, we continued walking through the mine...

“Iris, do you know what is the most important thing for adventurers to have? Yes, it’s water. Amongst all dangers, the situation you’d want to avoid the most is the ‘lack of water’. Thus, there are times where you should try to save the water you’ve brought...”

“Please leave your water problems to us! Kazuma-san and I can use ‘Create Water’, so please drink to your hearts content!”

Aqua interrupted Megumin, who warned Iris to save water, and quickly casted ‘Create Water’.

After filling up Iris’ bottle, she walked away in satisfaction.

As if she wanted to say something, Megumin followed shortly behind Aqua.

Finally, she spotted a large tree.

“Iris, there! Look at that, the tree has scars on it! I’ve seen those scars before, it means that there’s a killer-bee nest nearby. Let’s tread lightly so that they don’t come out...”

“Ah, everyone come and touch me. We’ll move forward using my ‘Hide’ skill. If we do that, we probably won’t be discovered by monsters.”

“.....”

Megumin’s lips began to twitch. She gazed at me with a mixed expression, and came to touch me.

—We advanced in this manner for a few hours.

“Now then, we’re about to confront a strong enemy, so why don’t we take a break for now? Iris, I’ll teach you about what you need to be aware of when resting in the wilderness. First, do not light a fire in the habitat of brutal monsters, so as to not draw their attention...”

“Kazuma-san Kazuma-san, can you Tinder this for me? I want to drink some delicious black tea.”

“You brought a tea set with you? You really can’t be helped huh. Make a cup for me alright? Here, ‘Tinder’.”

I used fire-magic to set alight the fallen branches and leaves that Aqua gathered.

“Uwaahhh!”

“Waaaahhh—! Hey Megumin what are you doing? Why did you put out the fire!?”

Megumin, who suddenly swung her staff to put out the fire—

“Don’t ‘what are you doing?’ me! If you light a fire in this place, won’t you attract monsters? Ever since I started lecturing her, you two have...!”

Shouted out loud. It was then—

“I’m picking up something from my Enemy Detect. Oi, something’s coming!”

It was a sound that gave me goosebumps.

Furthermore, seeing the birds fly away in fear, I realized that the creature was of some absurd level.

Aqua, who had her fire put out shouted.

“It’s all because Megumin shouted so loudly!”

“It’s my fault!? Yes, I totally caused this situation to happen, didn’t I!? I’m so sorry! I might’ve apologized, but I’m not satisfied with this, ok!?”

Even though we haven’t arrived at the mining area yet—

I wonder if this should be considered good or bad luck.

Its giant body toppled trees and shook the ground. I see, so the title of ‘king of monsters’ it’s not just for show.

Without thinking too much, I shouted.

“It’s comingggggg!”

A gold-colored dragon appeared.

Part 2

Dragon.

If we were able to slay this creature who had a tendency to gather lustrous objects, then we would gain both incomparable fame and insurmountable wealth.

The reason why it settled down in this gold mine was probably because it was drawn to the gold.

I heard that dragons were bad eaters, but it's completely possible that its color was a result of eating gold ore.

"Kazuma, we've hit the jackpot! This is a golden dragon, and amongst all types of dragon, this has the highest sale price! If you eat its meat you'll jump levels in one go, you can make rare potions from its blood, and you can even make skill-up potions from ingredients made from its parts. You could probably even make highest-quality weapons and gear from its hard horns and scales. It's practically a mountain of treasure!"

As everyone was scared by the sudden appearance of the dragon, Darkness alone stepped forth and prepared her greatsword.

"Iris-sama! I will draw the dragon's attention, so please attack it from a safe position! I'm not good at attacking, so...!"

Shouting that, Darkness activated the aggro-drawing skill 'Decoy'. Her current gallant appearance made it hard to imagine that she was usually such a piece-of-junk.

This girl, it would be great if she was like this usually.

"Alright Megumin, begin chanting explosion magic! Ideally, I don't want you to shatter such a precious dragon with your explosion magic, but if Iris has any trouble, don't hesitate to release it! Aqua, use your magic to support Iris and Darkness! I will attack it from a distance using my bow."

"U-U-U-U-, Understood...! W-W-, What, it's just a d-d-d-d-, dragon, before my explosion magic, it's no d-d-d-, different from a mere lizard...!"

“Hey you skimping NEET, don’t just tickle the dragon with your bow and arrow and try to be useful!”

The dragon looked at Darkness with bloodthirsty eyes, and closed the distance at a speed uncharacteristic of its large size.

As Megumin, who was weak to adversity, shook uncontrollably, Aqua, despite her complaints, casted her defense-increasing magic to support everyone..

I wanted to help somehow, but there was nothing I could do against a dragon.

There was no way my attacks could penetrate its hard scales. To start with, I’ll immediately die if I just get a tad too close.

“Come, golden dragon! I’ll let you witness the power of Dustiness who are called ‘the clan of shields’!”

Without taking a single step back from the giant, incoming dragon, Darkness, whose body shone with support magic, stood her ground firmly.

As I watched this fairy-tale like scene unfold, I noticed that Iris, who had received Aqua’s attack-up magic, was waiting with extreme patience.

As I turned to look—

Iris stood there holding her holy sword, her eyes closed, and without making a single movement.

Then, light that was akin to static electricity rose and shined around her body, accompanied by intense ripping noises. With my vast knowledge of anime and manga, I immediately came to a conclusion.

Something terrific was coming.

And what Iris was about to use was probably the strongest of those terrific things.

I’m familiar with this—

In the penultimate battle, this was something akin to the final strike that one poured their very body and soul into.

“GARRRRRRROOO, GRRRRRRRR...!”

Perhaps it was wary of Darkness. The golden dragon released a mighty cry, but

did not move to attack.

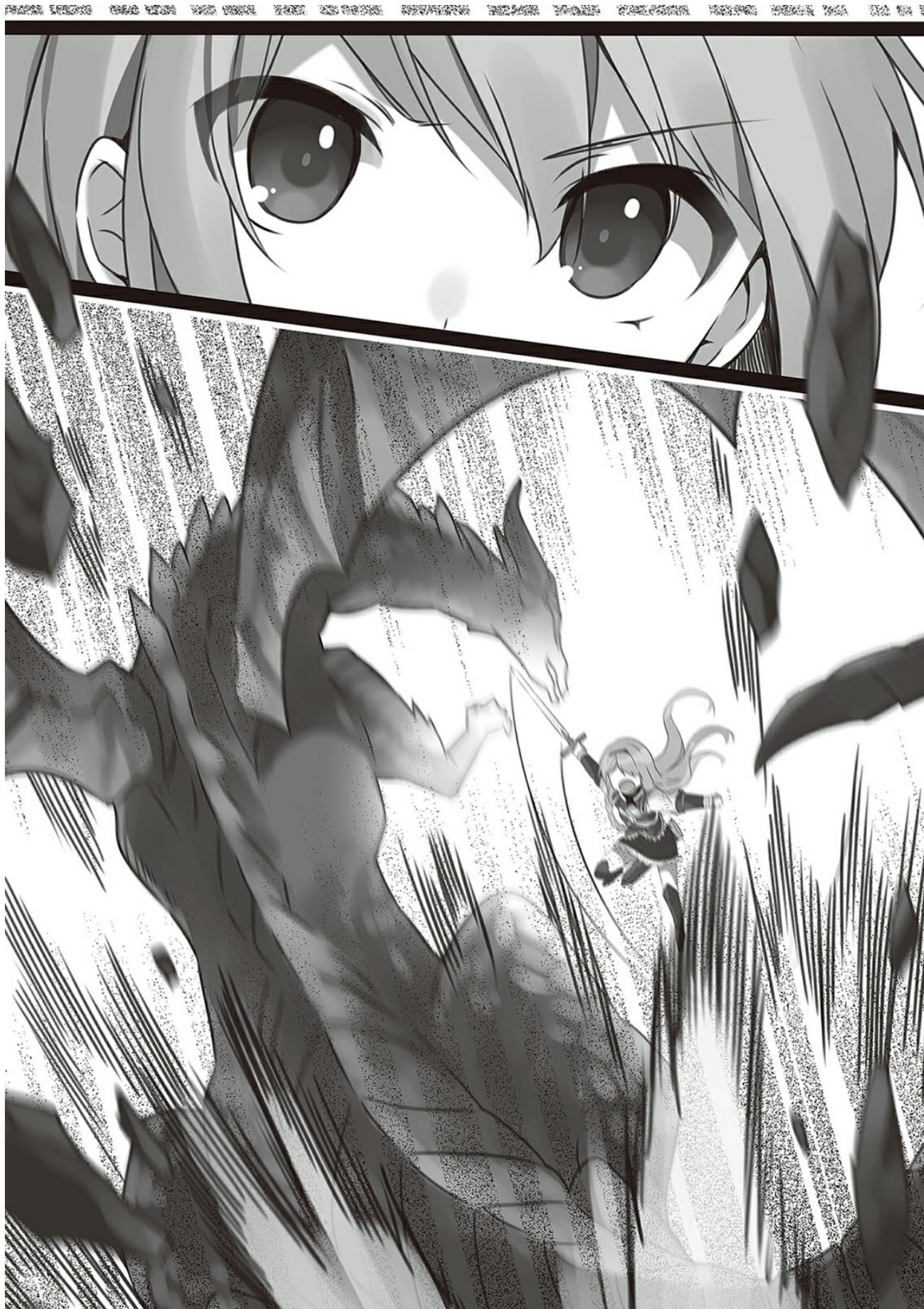
This dragon was certainly smart, but just this one time, it made a poor decision.

Iris, who had continued to concentrate, opened her eyes.

The magic power that floated in the atmosphere gathered into her sword, and the sword began to release ever-brightening light.

All I could see was the dragon's surprised and frightened appearance after it had noticed Iris.

“Sacred · Explode’ — !!”



Accompanied by Iris' shout that devoted her body and soul, the gold mine was

enveloped in a blinding light—!

—The town of Elroad erupted into a state of excitement.

“The dragon has been subjugated! The golden dragon in the gold mines has been slain by Belzerg’s princess!”

Returning to Elroad, we went straight to the adventurer’s guild and reported the dragon’s death.

Dragons were the embodiment of magic power.

Its horns, scales, teeth, and even drops of its blood were all ingredients of the highest grade.

We came to the guild to request that the employees retrieve its corpse, but it had caused a great commotion.

The corpse of a dragon was probably worth a fortune.

However, the amount of money we desired was not so small that it could be earned by working individually like this.

Whilst being applauded as dragon slayers, we headed towards the castle.

“I already heard about it! I never thought that you would be able to defeat the golden dragon...!”

The gatekeeper, who had once treated Iris adversely, greeted us with the utmost respect, to the point where his eyes seemed to shine as a result.

It was quite a 180° turn in attitude, but I don’t dislike it.

“Uhm, could you please tell me, just a little bit, about how you fought...”

Hearing the guard’s timid inquiry, I responded triumphantly.

“It ended with a single strike, alright?”

Although it was Iris’ handiwork.

“One strike!? O-, One strike...!”

We walked past the astonished guard, and headed towards the audience room.

—Receiving Iris’ special move head on, the dragon had been cleanly cut in half.

The area had been surrounded by light, and although I didn’t know what type of skill she had used, by the time I regained my senses, the golden dragon was already dead.

Just...

“Iris, don’t think that you’ve already won alright!? ‘Cause there’s no doubt that my explosion magic would’ve also defeated that dragon! I just didn’t want to blast this precious dragon to smithereens, so I purposely, purpose-ly, let you take the credit for this alright!?”

Regardless of when her thunder was stolen, or when she witnessed Iris’ incredible might, Megumin was just as irritating.

“I understand. I understand Megumin-san. So please let me go already.”

“No I won’t! Whatever that ‘Sacred · Explode’ thing was, I can’t forgive you for giving that skill a name that makes it sound like a high-level version of explosion magic. Don’t you dare use it again!”

It seems that Megumin was irritated by the ‘Explode’ part of the skill’s name.

“Despite the skill’s name being ‘Sacred · Explode’, it has nothing to do with ‘Explosion’...”

“How could you possibly say that it’s unrelated!? The name is practically ripped off from explosion magic! Not to mention, the reason behind its massive power is probably because it shares a similar name with ‘Explosion’!”

“Megumin-san, you’re really annoying! Don’t call the special move that’s been passed down through my clan a ‘rip off’ please! To start with, the special move originates from the sword’s name...!”

I ignored the two of them, and walked into the audience room. Sitting there was the prince, who seemed to be a tad different from usual—

“Did you really do it!?”

The prince, who had heard the details about our battle with the dragon, was

flushed red in his excitement. He was so excited that he practically spit as he spoke.

“Yes, here is the dragon’s horn that serves as evidence. Please take a look.”

Iris revealed the dragon horn that she carried on her back. The prince’s entourage, who were seated in the row, were all roused up.

They had held us in contempt and had looked down on us as country-bumpkins. However, perhaps due to the troubles the dragon had caused, or perhaps due to the great fame of a ‘dragon slayer’, they all looked at Iris with goodwill.

How’s that? She’s amazing right?

This girl is my little sister you know?

“A horn that shines with golden light... There’s no doubt that this is the horn of the golden dragon that lives in the mines...”

Hearing the astounded murmurs of the prince, the audience room seemed to heat up.

It was then—

“Please wait.”

The one who threw a bucket of ice cold water on the excited, heated atmosphere was the prime minister. He looked towards us coldly.

Oi, you’re not planning to give us more trouble, right?

“As expected of the princess who carries the hero’s blood. I can’t blame the demon king army for being afraid of your clan, I suppose... Oi!”

The prime minister gave a signal, and one of the soldiers came carrying a large leather bag.

...Huh? Weren’t we promised increase funding?

Since we’ve defeated so many demon king generals, I was able to guess how much money was in there based on the size of the bag.

Although this was appropriate for a reward for defeating a high-bounty monster, it was far and away from the money needed to fund a nation.

“...This is?”

Iris seemed to have the same thoughts. She timidly received the bag, and showed a perplexed expression.

“This is the rewards for the dragon-slaying request. This is an amount that is a fair bit more than the amount we would give to an adventurer. Please take it.”

“N-, No way...!”

Hearing the prime minister’s announcements, everyone in the room began to murmur amongst themselves.

Although we were on the ‘away’ side, the contents of their murmurs seemed to be sympathize with us.

“W-, Wait Ragcraft! I think that this is too harsh, but... N-, No, I understand. If we give them the increased funding then a variety of problems will occur. I completely understand that, but to give the dragon-slaying hero such a reward is...”

I thought that the prince hated Iris, but the one to speak up at this moment was him.

From a moment ago, he had begun looking at Iris, who he had previously hated, as though he was looking at a hero.

The prince was also a boy.

A ‘dragon slayer’ was probably someone that they admired and worshipped.

However—

“Prince, I’ve already explained to you countless times. Originally, it would have been best for us to cut the defense funding entirely, but turning a blind eye to that, granting the attacking funds is something that cannot be done, for the sake of the nation.... Iris-sama, I understand your situation, however, we also have our unavoidable circumstance. I hope that you understand.”

Hearing what the minister said, the prince lowered his head.

...Unavoidable circumstance?

At first I thought he was just harassing Iris, but was I wrong?

The prince, who continued to lower his head in shame, peeked a glance toward us— No, towards Iris.

“Uhm... I’m sorry. We also have various troubles, so we cannot give you the money. That’s all there is, please forgive me.”

The prince, who had been nothing but haughty and arrogant until now, was now lowering his head to apologize.

Seeing that, don’t talk about me, even Iris and Darkness weren’t able to say anything more.

“No way...”

As I expected, Iris’ high spirits completely disappeared.

She unconsciously grabbed onto my clothes, and stood there with a blank expression. The shock must’ve been too much for her.

Seeing that, the prince must’ve felt extremely guilty.

“Uhm, how should I say this... right. Would you like to go to the casino? Given how serious you are, you probably haven’t been to the casinos that are the pride of my nation, right? At the very least, go there and relax yourselves!”

That, well, wasn’t very encouraging—

.....

“Uhm, prince, do you have a moment?”

“Hm, what is it? Right now, your little sister is more...”

I knew that now wasn’t the right time, but I still opened my mouth to speak.

“I want to talk about the casinos. If we’re going to play, then I want to play around to the fullest before going home. Could you give me a pass to the biggest casino with the highest stakes?”

“...You... Are you serious? Your little sister is depressed right now, you know? Actually no, I was the one who told you guys to go to the casinos to relax, so do as you like. However, let me remind that the petty tricks that you used against me won’t work there alright? The casinos in this nation aren’t that naïve.

Anyway, since this nation was established on casinos, I wouldn't stop you, but —“

Before the prince could finish.

I courteously lowered my head to hide the smile that was appearing on my face.

—On our way home from the castle.

“...I'm so useless. I thought that if I worked hard, it would work out.... Onii-sama and everyone here helped out, and I promised everyone back at home that I would...”

Iris, who trudged along behind us, murmured depressedly.

As if to comfort her, Darkness opened her mouth to say something. Then—

“Kazuma, Kazuma. At times like this, should you do something as her onii-chan? That girl might be my underling, but I don't like it when she's depressed.”

What do these people take me for?

I really wish that these people would stop relying on me whenever they had some problem.

As for Aqua, who didn't seem to have fully understood what happened, she walked happily in front, moving in twists and turns, whilst humming to herself.

I turned back to face Iris, who walked alone behind us.

“Oi, Iris.”

Iris huddled her body in surprise.

Perhaps she thought that I was angry at her for screwing up. She clenched her fists tightly, and lowered her head further. To her— “You worked hard, Iris. Mm, you're a dragon slayer after all. Not to mention, you've become a hero as well. You've worked harder than anyone, and no one can blame you for this result.”

Hearing that, Darkness nodded her head several times.

“That's right Iris-sama! It's as Kazuma says, you've worked hard! When we

return to the castle, let me, Lalatina, tell the story of how Iris hard strug...!”

“That’s why, Iris—”

I interrupted Darkness who tried to cheer Iris up.

I put my hand on Iris’ head—

“Leave the rest to onii-chan”

And showed her a smile.

“Hey Megumin, those are the ‘headpat’ and ‘dumb smile’ techniques you know? To be specific that man is using the legendary skill where, by patting the head of a girl, and showing her a smile, he can make her fall in love with him.”

It’s true that I aimed to do that just a teensy bit, but at times like this, can you please read the mood a little?

Part 3

‘Leave the rest to onii-chan’

After saying that to Iris, I continued.

‘I have a good idea’.

“You little... After you said something cool like that, I was expecting something good, but in the end, it’s this again!?”

The answer was very simple.

Yes, it was the casino.

Using the luck that I was born with, I was going to earn money by gambling.

My answer couldn’t even be called a plan, and either way, there was no guarantee that it would work. Darkness was extremely angry about it, but there was no other move I could make, so it can’t be helped.

“Even if you say that, I think that this has a considerable chance of success.”

“What part of it even suggests that! Gambling money to earn money, especially when we need it the most, is obviously wrong, right!? I’m sorry Iris-sama, I was a fool to have trusted this man...”

Iris shook her head at Darkness, who had spouted some disrespectful things about me.

“No, Lalatina, I think that this is a good idea.”

“I-, Iris-sama!?”

Hearing the unexpected reply, Darkness fell into disarray.

“Iris-sama, please think it through again. You staked your life in order to obtain the dragon’s bounty and the price for its parts. Although it’s still far and away from the additional funds we desired from Elroad, compared to our former, desperate situation, this is...!”

Darkness emphasized Iris' achievements, and tried to get her to reconsider.

However, Iris gently took Darkness' hands into her own, and said.

"Lalatina, the archpriest of the Axis cult, Aqua-sama, once said that: 'Since it's pointless anyway, go ahead and try it. If you failed, then just run away.'"

"Iris-sama, those beliefs are wrong! You can't allow yourself to be polluted by the Axis cult!"

"Iris, don't become a hard-headed girl like her, alright? This is a casino. Casinos are places where you go to have fun."

"You imbecile, what do mean by hard-headed girl!"

Ignoring Darkness, who began to make a fuss, I took the support funds that Iris carried, and handed it over to the casino's manager in exchange for a large amount of chips.

First, I need to silence this noisy girl.

It should be fine, I'm friends with the real goddess of fortune after all.

Sitting at the roulette table, I scooped out about one-third of the chips.

Darkness and the audience's expressions stiffened. On the other hand, Iris silently observed the situation with a serious expression.

The face of my boss, who – unexpectedly – liked to have contests, appeared in my mind. Even now, she might be looking after me.

In order to give my little sister some peace of mind—

"Iris, I'll tell you this once more. You're meant to have fun during contests. Also, at times like this, this is what you say. This is the favorite phrase of my friend, who has better luck than me—"

I put all the chips in my hands on red.

Praying just a teensy bit to the mischief-loving goddess to borrow her strength, I raised my voice so that even the heavens might hear.

"Let's do it!"

—A thick, human wall formed as all the customers in the casino were gathered around the roulette table.

“Ahahahahaha! We won! We’ve won again! Because Kazuma-san has terrific luck! As long as we’re in a casino, I will follow you for the rest of my life!”

“Oi, don’t put your chips in the same place. What will you do if my good fortune runs away?”

It was a crushing victory.

Although the croupier was on the absolute verge of tears, there was no reason for me to stop here.

I said to Darkness, who had quickly become meek and obedient—

“Oi, bring me some more coffee.”

“Y-, Yes, immediately!”

Since a while ago, she had diligently brought me coffee, which I drank to energize myself.

When I had won the first bet, she had breathed a sigh of a relief.

By the second, she breathed lightly and showed a wry smile.

“I’ve brought it! No, your order has arrived! Please enjoy it!”

“Good work.”

By the third, she released a small gasp.

By the fourth and fifth, she started getting fidgety.

“Uhm, esteemed customer...”

By the seventh, eighth, the roulette’s croupier looked at me with awe and reverence.

“Hm? What’s up? You can’t tell me that ‘you can’t gamble anymore’ alright? After all, when a customer starts losing enormously, it’s not like you’d tell them to stop gambling, right?”

I reached into my basket, and took out a chip of enormous value.

“Well, I guess it’s about time we raised the stakes. If I remember correctly, if you get both the color and the number right, the return ratio increases massively right?”

“Esteemed customer! P-P-, Please don’t gamble anym....!

The manager, who had been observing the table from a distance, dashed towards me with a pale face.

If this was a private business, then I would feel slightly ashamed, but this was a state-run casino.

No matter how much I forcibly take from them, the only ones who would cry about it in the end were the prince and the prime minister, so there were no problems.

I ostentatiously sipped on the coffee that Darkness passed to me, and took out the two pendants that hung around my neck.

“Oi, do you know what this is?”

“...? ...T-, That is-!? The insignia of the two great nobles families of the neighboring nation, house Dustiness and house Shinformea!?”

The manager’s face grew even paler.

“Yes, I’m being backed by these great noble-samas. Do you know what that means? If you don’t allow me to gamble any more, then there’ll be some foreign affairs problems, you know?”

“Guh-...!”

Fu, it’s my win, isn’t it?

“Amazing, onii-sama! I heard that your luck is great, but I never would’ve thought that it would be to this extent! If your luck is this good, rather than being an adventurer, wouldn’t it be fine to amass a fortune from casinos?”

Iris, who had been excited, grasped my hands and said that.

To live by gambling at casinos.

It’s not like I haven’t thought about that, but if someone like myself, who’s merely a weak adventurer that gets caught up in incidents easily, wins big at a

casino, then my life will surely be targeted.

Also, this would only be successful if I did it occasionally.

If I followed my desires forever, then I probably wouldn't end up anywhere decent.

The reason I could do this was because I had the backing of two great nobles and a princess, as well as the fact that I was earning money for the just cause of fighting the demon king army.

If not for that, I believe that Eris-sama would've already intervened.

"No, I don't want to be a gambler. In order to defeat the demon king, I'd much rather be an adventurer instead."

As I said such cool lines, Iris looked at me with eyes of respect.

I put the basket full of chips on top of black-6. All the curious spectators began to make a commotion.

"Now, let's do this!"

The croupier, who was pressed by my sheer presence, took a ball with his sweaty palms...!

"I'll put it here as well ok!?"

"Ah"

Before I could stop her, Aqua put her chips in the same spot.

At the same time, the ball was propelled, and the turned around the roulette.

"You little-! I told you not to put anything! This isn't a game ok!?"

"Why can't I gamble as well you stingy shut-in NEET! I've had nothing but losses recently, so let me earn a little back..."

As I scolded Aqua, the ball began to slow...

"Red-5"

"YOU SEEEEEEEEEEEEE!?"

"WAAAH—! My little savings, it's all gone—!"

I called for Darkness, and instructed her to take Aqua away.

“Hey Darkness, I beg you! If I don’t earn a lot of money here then I won’t be able to buy a gift for Emperor Zell! I’ll pay you back when I win, so let me borrow some!”

“I’ll buy the gift, so come over here! The future of my nation is at stake you know!?”

As I saw Aqua, who was being dragged by Darkness off, I recomposed myself.

Now that the goddess of pestilence is gone, things should return to normal.

“Kazuma Kazuma, to win back what we lost, let’s go all out! Go and bet all the chips!”

“Not gonna. Unlike you guys, I’m a prudent person. Ah, what are you trying to do with my chips! Darkness, take this girl away!”

As Megumin and Aqua were dragged away by Darkness, I placed a bet on black-8.

“Let’s do this!”

—The night.

“Kazuma-san, Kazuma-san. You were really cool today. You know, I have meant to tell you that for a long time...”

“No matter how much you praise me I’m not gonna give you an allowance alright? ‘Cause if I give you money then you’ll just mess up my bet... Oh, they’re here they’re here.”

As we were walking home after our crushing win—

Well, I can’t say I didn’t expect this.

“Hey you, do you have a moment?”

Two masked men blocked the way in front of me.

Seeing that, Iris looked at me with eyes of respect.

“Amazing, onii-sama! To think that you predicted this—!”

“Right? It’s just as I said. ‘We’ll definitely get ambushed.’ These people are hired by the casino, you know?”

In response to what I said, the men hurriedly shook their heads.

“Y-, You’re wrong! We’re muggers that came after hearing that you won big! Be obedient and leave the money here, otherwise you’re in for a world of pain. Don’t worry, your life is s...”

Ignoring what they said, I took out the wire that was used for ‘Bind’.

“Alright you guys, capture these guys and use the lie-detecting chi-ring chi-ring magic tool to collect some evidence! I mean, if they’re backed by the casino, then we can blow this event out of proportion and forcibly ‘request’ the funding!”

Hearing what I said, not only the men before us, but even my companions were stunned.

“K-, Kazuma, you.... Is that why you said we should go through the dark alleyway on our way home? Ah, that’s why you told Aqua to cast support magic, and go to the casino fully equipped...”

Hearing Darkness’ murmur, the men retreated several steps, and whispered to one another.

“Oi, isn’t this looking bad for us? I can’t help but feel that we’ve been tricked, but...”

“More importantly, isn’t that person over there a crimson magic clansman? To add onto that, there are two blonde-haired blue-eyed people. That means that...”

“Oi, there were nobles! All the nobles are super strong, you know!?”

Oho, I can’t allow that.

“They look like they’re gonna run. Those guys are mountains of treasure, don’t let them get away! You don’t need to hold back, alright? If something happens, we have Aqua for ‘Resurrection’ alright!?”

As I shouted towards the men...

“Run! These guys are trouble, they even said that ‘we have Resurrection’! These guys are for real, they’re really gonna do it!”

“We can’t let them catch us! RUN! RUN!”

“Wait, don’t leave me behind!”

As I thought, they were hired by the casino.

They hurriedly ran away without leaving a single moment for doubt.

“...Hey Kazuma, to say ‘Resurrection’ and things like that, isn’t that a bit too much? Just saying.”

“Nope, I figured that if I said that they would get scared. I mean, there’s no way I have the guts for... Hey what is it, don’t look at me like that. For real, please stop!”

I, who was left behind, desperately tried to explain myself.

Part 4

After that, we continued to go to the casino every day.

“Incoming—!”

The manager’s face would pale whenever he saw me.

—At first, he probably never thought that I would continue to win in such a tremendous manner.

Every time I went to the casino, the manager would look at me from afar with an abhorrent expression.

However, after seeing me earn more day by day, it seems that he finally realized that he couldn’t allow this farce to continue.

“Esteemed customer? Uhm, due to your immense ability, our business may be forced to close in the near future. We will give you a reward, so please...”

“This is a state-run casino isn’t it? There’s no way it’d go out of business. It’s fine even if you’re going red in the bankbook, you know? To start with, the prince of this country himself had told me to ‘go to a casino and relax’. Here look, this is the VIP card that I got from the prince.”

“T-, The prince!? N-, No way, how could it be...”

Ignoring the astonished manager, I, again, gambled to my heart’s content today.

—A couple days had passed since then.

Given how the gambling money was snowballing, the additional funding was no longer just a pipe dream.

“E-E-E-, Esteemed customer. Uhm, actually, the casino is planning to temporarily stop operating starting tomorrow. And well, you see, because you

are a regular customer of ours, I felt the need to inform you...”

“Oh, is that so? Well, until we reach our desired goal, we’ll continue to live here for however many years it takes. However, if the casino stays closed for such a long time, will the country’s revenue books be alright?”

“However many years...”

To get me to stop, he even told me that the business would be suspended.

“—Esteemed customer, I beg you! Please! Please no more! I’m being scolded by my superiors every single day, so please forgive me!”

“I’m telling you, it’s fine, it’s fine. The prince said it’s fine after all. If you got any complaints, bring it to the prince, alright?”

As the manager was about to cry—

As we were about to – again – enter the casino today, we were stopped by an emissary from the castle.

—After being led to the castle by the emissary, we were immediately brought to the audience room.

“I’m begging you, just go home already.”

Once we saw him, he immediately lowered his head and said such a thing.

Despite it being a short time since we last met, he seemed extremely haggard and worn out.

“Oi oi, you said to Iris that she should ‘go to the casinos and relax’, right? All we’re doing is relaxing, alright. Once we’re done relaxing we’ll go home.”

“Wait, if you keep winning like this, then I can’t take this as a joke anymore! With the way it’s going, my nation will have practically given you the additional funding!”

Even if you say that—

“You call yourselves ‘the great nation of casinos’, but you’re going to drive the

customers that have won big home? What is that supposed to mean, hm? All we've done is play around in one of your casinos, so is there a problem?"

"Gu... That is... my nation also has particular circumstances..."

So it's what he said before, huh?

But of course, I don't think that has anything to do with us.

"Uhm, what do you mean by 'particular circumstances'? Why are you unwilling to tell us?"

Iris walked up to the prince and asked him.

The prince lost his composure for a mere moment, and his expression quickly turned apologetic.

"No, this is just..."

However, the prince was interrupted.

"My nation intends to make a deal with the demon king army."

The prime minister, who suddenly stated the unthinkable, showed a completely calm expression.

The people in the audience room seemed to have also known this, as none of them seemed to be fazed.

"Ragcraft, you...!"

The prince hurriedly raised his hand to stop the prime minister, however, he continued.

"My nation is currently involved in peace negotiations with the demon king army. Should the demon king army defeat your nation, they have promised to leave my nation alone, on the condition that we cut our support for Belzerg."

Darkness bore her fangs against the prime minister, who had said that indifferently.

"You bastard, you believe in the words of the demon king army!? Do you have

no shame as a human being!?”

To Darkness, who was furious like never before—

“However, the truth is that Belzerg is unable to overcome the demon king army. As of now, the demon king army and your nation are currently in a stalemate, and the state of the battle is at which no one knows who would win. Thus, pledging our neutrality, and removing ourselves from the state of affairs would not be a bad choice to make as a country’s leader, is it not?”

The prime minister furrowed his brows as he said that, without a single trace of sincerity.

Well, it’s not like I wanted to be related to stuff about the demon king either, so it’s not like I didn’t understand how he felt.

However, right now, I’m here as Iris’ brother.

As I was racking my brain for a method to bring this all to an end, Darkness raised her voice.

“To think that you would trust the demon king...! Listen closely. The demon king is a terrible existence that kidnaps females – even children – and ‘plays’ with them for his own amusement! A terrible existence that kidnaps princesses and female knights, and sexually assaults them with limitless, inexhaustible, and unspeakable methods, such is the demon king!”

“D-, Don’t say such disrespectful things! No, I mean, where did you hear such rumors? Actually, I am in charge of the negotiations. From my conversations, I feel that the demon king-sama is a rather open-hearted, and trustworthy member of the demon race...”

Saying strange things such as ‘trustworthy member of the demon race’, the prime minister intently defended the demon king.

However—

“Even if you say that, this saying is actually quite famous... On top off that, I’ve heard that ‘the demon king is a lolicon’, ‘the demon king is the number one pervert on the continent that likes abnormal play’, ‘the demon king is a homo’, and other rumors like that...”

“Who the heck is spreading such baseless rumors!?”

Towards prime minister, who was infuriated for some reason, Aqua showed a triumphant expression, and announced.

“These are rumors that are spread by us, the Axis cult! My children use their own ways to spread my image of the demon king, you see?”

“Hey, the reason the demon king attacks humanity really isn’t because of you guys, right?”

Hearing about the handiwork of the Axis cult, the prime minister pressed his hands against his head.

For someone he trusted to be talked about in such a way, he must be losing it.

It’s not like I couldn’t understand why he would try to cover the demon king, who was his negotiation partner, but...

It was then—

“Uhm, prince Revi? I have a good grasp on the situation. The demon king said that, ‘After Belzerg is defeated, I will attack Elroad next. If you don’t want to that to happen, then work together with me’, or something like that, yes? That said, if the prince has thought this through, and has come to this decision for the sake of survival, then I will not object.”

The princess-sama, who continued to be timid, unselfish, strong, and kind, decided to use such a harmless method and— “Please rest assured. So that the relationship of our nations does not crumble, I will smooth things out with my father... I have faith in my ability to judge people, you know? During our first meeting, I somehow understood that the prince does not truly hate me. You were merely conceited. That’s the feeling I have.”

And then she said to the prince, who kept his head lowered—

“Belzerg’s royalty is strong. Even without the funding, we wouldn’t lose to the demon king army. That’s why...”

As though she was comforting a hurt child, she said in a gentle voice.

“So please don’t show such a pained expression.”

Saying that, she showed an innocent smile.

“...It seems that I am called an idiot prince by the world.”

Said the prince who sat on the throne of the audience room.

Then, he suddenly rose his head, and said.

“It seems that people say that I don’t care about politics, and that I spend all my time doing nothing but gambling.”

Towards Iris, who seemed a bit absent-minded at the turn of events, the prince finally showed a smile befitting of his age.

“Would you like to have one more contest with me? No tricks this time alright? If you are able to win against me... Then I will bet that Belzerg will beat the demon king!”

“P-, Prince!?”

As prime minister released a pained cry, the prince took out a coin, and flaunted it to me. Then, he hid his hands behind his back.

Then, he stretched his two, clenched fists forward.

“—Now, which hand is the coin in?”

Part 5

That night.

At a time too early to sleep, but too late to do something—

As for the contest we had after that, there's no need for me to say anything more, right?

The prime minister made a fuss, but the prince's followers all held unexpectedly satisfied expressions.

In some sense, they were probably happy that their master was able to make a decision of his own accord.

Perhaps from now on, no one will call him an idiot prince.

—In the end, the defense funding for the war against the demon king army was restored.

Furthermore, a large amount of funds that would be used to support the offense efforts was obtained.

On top of that, Iris gained the title of 'dragon slayer', so it wouldn't be wrong to say that this was the best possible result.

...However, I was bothered by one thing.

That prince, unexpectedly, seems to have gained interest in Iris.

The reason he had showed that attitude during our first meeting was in order to keep the distance between Iris' nation and his. Now that the funding problem was resolved, he once again held a reception, this time however, it was a plentiful banquet. Not to mention, during the banquet, they seemed to be getting along just fine.

Yes, unlike the first time around, their relationship improved for the better.

This was beyond my initial calculations.

To start with, the reason I followed along was so that Iris wouldn't be handed

over to shady man.

Luckily, the prince himself had intentionally avoided her, so I had been relieved. However, at this moment, I couldn't help but remember my duty, "What should I do? Should use steal on that little brat to reveal his lower half in front of Iris? ...No, letting Iris see something strange is bad for her growth, however, my opponent might be that kid, but he's still a prince. I can't use any rough methods either..."

We had taken up the prime minister's offer for us to stay at the castle for today, and right now, I was rolling around the bed while thinking to myself.

As I 'hm'-ed out loud—

Someone lightly knocked on the door and spoke.

"Kazuma, are you here? I have something I want to talk to you about, is now fine?"

I could hear Megumin's voice from outside.

Since I wasn't planning on sleeping yet, I left the door unlocked.

"It's open—"

I said in the direction of the door.

"Excuse me for coming here at this time..."

Megumin murmured whilst entering the room. Her face was slightly red.

What was she up to?

Something like thanking me for what happened with Iris?

Yes, now that I think about it, this girl seemed to be secretly doing something with Iris.

Well, now that I have the chance, why don't I ask her?

...As I was thinking that—

"Uhm, can I sit beside you?"

Without waiting for my reply, she sat down beside me.

What's up with her today? She sure was close with me today.

...Then, something flashed in my head.

Yes, I remembered what happened a while back.

What did I say to Megumin before?

If I remember correctly, this is what I said.

‘...Well then, if you can finally let go of your guilt towards that onee-san, and if you wanted to do that kind of thing again, I have no reason to refuse—!’

And Megumin replied like this.

‘Is that so? If that day really comes, then I’ll come to your room to play again.’

My heart skipped a beat, but I tried my best to look calm.

“G-, Go ahead. What’s come over you today? You can’t fall asleep so you’ve come to play a game with me? If that’s the case, Iris is closer to your level, so go and—”

Interrupting what I said, Megumin leaned her face closer.

Perhaps she was excited, as her eyes shone crimson red. I felt a serious atmosphere that didn’t allow for any joking around.

I reflexively gulped.

“I want you to sleep with me tonight. Uhm, is... that... fine...?”

She said that in a soft voice as she grabbed my hand tightly and turned her head away embarrassedly.

Somehow, this day has finally arrived.

Without further ado, the day of victory is upon me.

However, calm down. First, lock the door to prevent anyone from coming in.

Then, stay calm, and don’t be greedy. As an elder man, I must take the lead.

I firmly grasped Megumin’s shoulders and then let go. Gesturing to lock the door...

“Uhm, Kazuma? I’m, uhm, not as big a Darkness, so as expected, it’s no good.... is it?”

“Nothing like that. I am a man that loves it equally, regardless of whether it’s small or large. Please don’t misjudge me as such a petty man.”

In response to my rebuttal, Megumin drew herself a teensy bit away.

“I-I-, Is that so. Then... Uhm, It’s embarrassing, so could you close your eyes for a moment?”

“I refuse.”

“I-, I feel troubled about your refusal, but... The room is bright you see? So please, for just a little...”

Megumin lost her composure at my immediate response.

It can’t be helped then, I should be obedient and close my eyes.

But at the very least, I should lock the door first.

If I don’t, then some person who can’t read the mood will come barging in...

The moment I worriedly, but anticipatedly, closed my eyes—

—I lost consciousness.

“...Mm...but, you’re...”

“...No Dark... I’m... You’re...”

I heard a man and girl talking.

Hearing that, using my blurry mind, I started to think about what exactly happened.

“-!?”

When I came to, I noticed that my mouth had been gagged.

It wasn’t just that, my hands were tied, and my body was covered in ropes, making it so that I couldn’t move at all.

No matter how much I struggled, I couldn’t break free. Using my ‘Night Vision’ skill, I found that I was locked in some sort of closet.

...NOT THIS AGAINNNNNNNNNNN!

As I was agonizing in the closet, I heard the voices again.

“B-B-, But Kazuma, there’s too big of a difference in our social statuses, so it’s not that simple... No, of course I don’t hate you, but—! But, it’s still too early for this, or something like that...”

That was Darkness’ voice.

What the heck was this girl saying? As I was thinking about that—

From the other side of the closet, came another voice that caused me to reflexively flinch.

“What do you mean by our differences in status? I swear that, even if I have to throw away my status, I will love you alone, Darkness. That’s why please, with me...!

That was my voice.

“Throw away your status? What are you saying? You’re just a commoner.”

“Eh-? Huh-?”

The blank, stupefied voice responded to Darkness’ question was undoubtedly mine.

“Rather, you’ve been acting rather strange. To give a specific example, the fact that you’re completely calm when you’re alone in a room with me is tormenting.”

That girl...! I want to burst out of here and slap her.

There’s a limit to your self-confidence! I won’t stay incompetent and weak forever...

...Mm, I should have some composure right now, but...

“N-, No, of course I’m nervous when I’m alone with you. More importantly, my gaze...”

I heard my voice once again.

But before ‘I’ could finish, Darkness—

“...Oi, for a while now, you haven’t been looking at my chest at all. What’s that supposed to mean? Your gaze is so sincere, even in this situation.... You bastard, you’re not the real Kazuma, are you!?”

“Kuh-!”

What should I do with her after this?

Although I wasn’t sure what was happening, it seems that outside the closet, some imposter was imitating my voice.

Should I be happy that she saw through the imposter, or should I be angry about the cruel things she said about me?

“If it’s like this, then you leave me no other choice. I’ll do whatever I can to suppress you-! This is that man’s room, and you’ve noticed that he’s not here, right? If you resist, then who knows what’ll happen to him...!?”

Crap, the situation is taking a turn for worse.

If he says that, then that prideful girl that cares for her friends, will...

“Wha...! You bastard, you dare take a hostage, you coward!? W-, What do you plan on doing to me with the rope and handcuffs!? Are you going to tie me up!? Are you planning to handcuff me, tie me up, and do unspeakable things to me!?”

“No, I don’t plan on doing unspeakable things to you, I just need to keep you restrained... W-, What, you’re unexpectedly honest, aren’t you?”

“Kuh, it’s fine if you do this to me, but don’t you dare lay a hand on my friends! Ah, the handcuffs are cold...! Oi you, could you use that voice and say ‘Hehe, what an excellent sight to behold, Darkness! You already know what’s gonna happen from here, right?’ with a slightly savage tone to it?”

Yes, for the depraved pervert that absolutely loved this situation, this was merely nature taking its course.

“You... N-, No, ok. Hey, I’m trying to tie you up, so stop squirming. Oi, I’m not gonna do anything strange to you, so stop blushing!”

“I mean, you’re doing this with that face of yours, so...! Oi, what are you planning to do with me? Could it be that you’re planning on locking me into this closet, and...!”

As I heard something approached, the closet was opened before my eyes.

Darkness and my eyes met for a short moment.

“...Were you looking at this shameful sight this entire time?”

I nodded my head.

—With her mouth gagged, Darkness, whose face was flushed red in embarrassment, was shoved into the closet together with me. Together, we looked at the handsome man before us.

“Now then, let me tell you who I am, and why I did such a thing.”

It would be fine if the refreshing man that looked exactly like me stayed silent about it, but for some reason, he went out of his way to tell us.

My lookalike showed a flabby sneer, and then transformed into a pitch-black human silhouette.

“My name is Ragcraft. The leader of the demon king army’s intelligence division, Doppelganger Ragcraft. My my, you guys gave me a run for my money.”

The monster that reported the prime minister’s name had a smooth featureless face that did not have a nose nor a mouth. As if to brag, he began to say some pointless things—

“—And that is what happened thirty years ago. I had finally become a minister of domestic affairs after applying countless number of times during an endless amount of selection periods. From there on, I worked wholeheartedly each and every single day. Useless co-workers who were immersed into casinos. Royalty who were crazy about casinos, and the nobles who loved the casinos just as much. Thanks to their splurging, wasting, and overspending, do you have any idea how hard I was forced to work...? ‘Leaving this country alone would be beneficial to the demon king army, wouldn’t it?’ Do you have any idea how many times I thought that?”

I thought that he was gonna brag, but it seems like he’s just complaining about work.

When the mastermind captures their opponents, they’re supposed to give

them some pleasant last words or something, but it seems that all he wanted to do was vent his accumulated frustration.

And thus, Ragcraft continued to talk about his efforts with no end in sight.

Ragcraft, who worked seriously and had no interest in gambling, immediately gained the royal family's trust.

Until then, everything had been going well.

However, he, who finally had a hand in the domestic affairs after arriving at his position, realized the true state of the nation.

It was losing money at an unbelievable rate, and was in an outrageous debt.

Ignoring that, the royal family continued to play around each and every day.

“Do you get it? All the people of this nation continued live off of the money that the first king had won through gambling, and were driving this country to the brink of collapse. The one who turned that all around was...”

It seems that, perhaps due to his serious nature, this person had worked earnestly.

His original goal was to be a spy.

However, due to his serious personality and wondrous abilities, he had rapidly climbed the social ladder.

In the end, he forgot his original goal, and continued to work earnestly for the sake of the nation.

It seems that, arriving at the highest seat of domestic affairs, the position of prime minister, he suddenly noticed that— “There was no need to do all that, right?”

I see. He wasn't a serious person, but rather, an idiot.

“After arriving at this position, I finally began to move. Yes, the time to act for the sake of the demon king-sama had finally come. Despite the worthless rumors that you imbeciles spread about the demon king-sama, my master is actually a wonderful person who is worth working for...”

Ragcraft's story, that could be one of complaints, hardship, or boasting,

continued on for a while. Finally, he breathed an air of satisfaction.

“Fuu~. I’ve always wanted to tell someone about my long years of complaints and hardship, but I couldn’t until now. Thank you for listening.”

So in the end, you were really just complaining?

“Now then, I would like to have my revenge against you guys, who made all my long years of hard work amount to nothing in the end. At first, I really really wanted to kill you, but I thought about it again.”

I couldn’t help but feel that this was taking a turn for worse.

It seems that Darkness was getting the same bad premonition.

“What do you guys hate the most? Yes, that is if that princess Iris is harmed.”

‘Mmu, Mmu!’—

Hearing that, Darkness began to struggle.

However, because she was tied up, she couldn’t do anything.

“Ah, that’s the expression, that’s the expression I wanted to see! HAHAAHAHA, I’ll keep you guys here for now. Then, I’ll take your appearance and first go to your companions’ rooms to restrain them in the same manner, tell them the same thing I told you, and then head to princess Iris’ room!”

Saying that, Ragcraft looked directly at me.

“Then I’ll be borrowing your unattractive appearance for just a little longer. FUHAHAHAHAHA, yes, that’s the frustrated expression I wanted to see! Oh joy! Oh joy! What a truly joyful moment this is!!”

Saying such rude things, he copied my appearance, and left the room.

Part 6

After struggling in the closet for a while, Darkness and I realized that brute force wasn't going to work.

Since the closet was closed, our noises won't be heard outside either.

Was the nuisance that couldn't read the mood not going to come?

Now that I think about it, why did Darkness come to my room at this time?

"Fmgh-! Fmgh-!!"

Ah you can't do that.

Headbutting the closet several times, and seeing that there was hardly any effect, Darkness gave up on that plan.

Then, Darkness, who seemed like she was about to cry out of love for her master, seemed to have a sudden realization. The look in her eyes changed.

You want to topple the closet?

Or you want to struggle some more?

I used eye-signals to transmit this message. Although I wasn't sure if she understood my intentions, she began to squirm towards me with bloodshot eyes.

"Fmm-Fmmm—!"

Hey, I don't understand.

Although I tried to get that message across, she continued to 'fmmfmm' and struggle.

Finally, Darkness, writhing like an earthworm, pressed her face towards mine.

Eh, isn't your face a bit too close?



In this emergency situation, our cheeks were practically touching.

No, actually, given how hard she was trying to stick to me, our mouths were extremely close as well!

Since I wasn't able to tell her that this wasn't the time to do that, I'll just let her— "Fmgu-!"

"-!?"

She bit down on my gag.

Despite the gag in her own mouth, she bit down and pulled on the restraints of my gag.

I finally noticed what Darkness was trying to do.

As Darkness pulled with her teeth, I moved my backwards...!

"'Tinder'!"

With the little space that was created, I chanted this short, one-phrase magic.

The fire caused by the ignition magic travelled down my gag, and continued to burn...!

"HOTHOTHOTHOTHOTHOOAAHH!"

After the bangs of my hair were scorched, the gag was finally burned off.

Although I wanted to use 'Freeze' to cool it, now wasn't the time for that.

"Darkness, I'm going to use ignition magic on you, ok? Even if I use 'Tinder' on the ropes binding my body, the ropes will take a long time to burn, and I might not be able to force them apart while that's happening, but if it's you..."

As if signaling for me to not tell anyone about it, Darkness vigorously nodded her head.

"'Tinder'-!"

I set Darkness' ropes on fire.

Running along the dim, lampless hallway—

Darkness and I, who were still handcuffed, ran through the castle.

“Oi Darkness, where’s Iris’ room!?”

“I don’t know! The one that assigned the rooms was that prime minister, the only room I know is yours!”

If that’s the case, that means we don’t know where Aqua and Megumin were staying in the large castle either huh.

Then, noticing something peculiar, I asked Darkness.

“By the way, how did you know where I was staying? Also, what time did you come? That prime minister restrained me so that I wouldn’t cause any more trouble, but did he tell you to come to my room?”

Darkness shivered in surprise.

“T-, That is... No, this incident could only be resolved thanks to your help, so... I thought that this time, instead of thanking you with something childish like a kiss on the cheek, I would give you something more earnest...”

“Ero-! You are just Ero-ness after all! During this kind of emergency, you came to creep into my bed!? Just how much of a depraved lecher are you!?”

“Y-Y-Y-, You’re mis-! I didn’t plan on going that far! I was just planning on something a bit more soft-...! Also, by the results, I saved you, didn’t I? So isn’t that fine!?”

Hearing Darkness’ defiant reply, I remembered that Darkness, during our stay here, had murmured something about giving me a more earnest gift.

For something so important as this, I wish she’d leave it till we got home.

Although I, who’d thought that I would finally cross the line with mock-Megumin, didn’t really have the right to say anything.

It was then.

“Ah—!”

Despite the time, some idiot pointed at us and started shouting.

“I finally found you you sexually harassing NEET!”

“So you were here you despicable man! Absolutely despicable! You really are despicable!”

In the darkness, I saw Aqua and Megumin, whom were in their pajamas, charging towards us.

There was no reason for me to be called a sexually harassing NEET, so what's with these two?

"Oi you, don't speak of me like a criminal. I don't have the time to care about your problems right now. More importantly, do you know where Iris' room is? This is an emergency situation, so if you know anything, please tell me."

Hearing what I said, Aqua and Megumin exchanged glances.

"Iris' room is just ahead, but is there anything you want to explain first? I never thought that Kazuma would try to crawl into Aqua's bed."

Hearing that, I instinctively burst out—

"Are you kidding me!? Even I have the right to choose whose bed I want to crawl into you know!?"

"You went into people's rooms and tried to sweet talk them, so what are you trying to say now!? Geez, if Megumin didn't come to my room to play, who knows what you would've done!"

Darkness and I exchanged glances, and lightly nodded.

"Oi, you, just bring us to Iris' room already! Also, there's no way I would try to assault Aqua, alright? Even when we were sleeping together at the stables I didn't do anything, you know!? Even in the store I visit often, I never once looked to you for 'help' alright!?"

"Oho-!? You were so passionate just a moment ago, but now that you've been rejected, are you so embarrassed that you want to pretend nothing happened!? If you really want to sweet talk me or something like that, use your assets or expensive saké or something! There are a variety of ways, right? If you do that, I even won't mind linking arms with you!"

I really want to slap this idiot right now.

No, more than that, I want to slap Ragcraft, who created this stupid mess!

"That was just an fake, a doppelganger! It was just a doppelganger! A doppelganger has infiltrated this castle, and it's targeting Iris!"

Aqua and Megumin turned to exchange a glance towards each other again.

“Hey, are you saying that the ‘you’ that was praising my hair was just an imposter? Then about the incomprehensible things you said, like ‘If you weren’t an Axis cultist, you would be perfect’, that was...?”

“‘You’ also told me that ‘If you weren’t a crimson magic clansman, you would be perfect’. Back then, I really wanted to blow ‘you’ up.”

Saying these things I didn’t want to hear, they led us to Iris’ room.

Please stop! Just what kind of sweet talk did that guy use, please stop already!

Based on the current course of events... Could it be that my imposter was going to sweet talk Iris?

I’d like to say that that’s absurd, since he was convinced that she was my sister, but...

“Here it is. This is the room that Iris is staying in... hm, there are some noises from inside.

Crap, he’s already inside.

The moment Darkness and I moved to—!

“‘Exterior’ — —!”

open the doors...

An intense shockwave passed slightly above my head.

A few moments later, the door to the room collapsed...

“O-, Onii-sama!?”

In the room was Iris, who was dressed in pajamas with sword in hand, and whose face was flushed bright red.

Just what sort of sweet talk had she been subjected to?

On the ground, was a black liquid that appeared to be what was left of Ragcraft—

Part 7

“—I’m truly ashamed!”

The next morning.

After the people in the castle learned about the commotion, we returned to the hotel that we stayed at.

The next morning, we returned to the castle, but...

“Uhm, prince Revi, you’re unrelated to the incident, so you don’t need to...”

Ignoring the presence of his retainers, the prince suddenly prostrated himself the moment he saw Iris, and she was bewildered as a result.

The news that ‘the prime minister was a doppelganger’ had already leaked from the castle, and everyone in town already knew about it.

Now, Iris was not only just a dragon slaying hero, she had become the savior of this country that had freed the nation from the clutches of a doppelganger.

And all the people of this nation also knew that their savior was also engaged to the prince, so the entire castle town was as noisy as a festival.

“I’m sorry! Either way, I was an idiot. Ah, I can’t complain if I’m called an idiot prince! If it weren’t for princess Iris, my country would’ve fallen to the clutches of the demon king army...”

The prince had been like this for a while now.

It seemed that Ragcraft had deep roots in this nation, and now that it had come to light that he was a doppelganger, he seemed to have taken a great shock.

Everyone’s ‘you’re just a country-bumpkin’ attitude towards Iris had completely turned on its head, and worshipped her so much that it was hard to tell who was the leader of this nation.

Then, Iris walked into the center of the audience room, and smiled towards the prostrated prince.

“Prince, you’re also a member of royalty, so you can’t lower your head so easily, you know?”

Hearing that, the prince jumped to his feet, and deeply exhaled.

“I-, I understand, however, as a result of this incident, we owe you a large debt. My nation will never forget Belzerg’s favor. If there are any troubles from here on out, please tell us. Uhm...”

After a bit of hesitation—

“‘Cause Belzerg and Elroad are allied and friendly nations after all.”

Then, he turned his face away.

With the gentle gazes that the retainers and Iris sent towards the prince, a harmonious atmosphere permeated the audience room.

Darkness, who felt that Iris’ presence was too radiant, moved to stand beside her.

“Now then, with this, the incident comes to an end. Everything was wrapped up in an amicable manner and the relationship between our nations has improved. From the results, all’s well, is it not? From today onwards, my nation will be in your care, prince Revi.”

“Ah, although we can only assist you from behind, please leave it to us. However, everything truly ended well. Not to mention, princess Iris’ brother has also taken good care of me. Although it’s unacceptable to resort to trickery, it was a good social experience.”

Compared to when we first met, the prince was unbelievably calm. In a good mood, he—

“Since you’ll be my brother someday as well, feel free to think of this castle as your home, and come here to play around anytime.”

Said some rather incomprehensible things.

Since no one else is offering to give him a straight-man rebuttal, let’s give him a warning.

“Why would I become your brother? Are you high? How did you even think of

something like that?”

At my words, the audience room seemed to freeze.

“..... Eh? No, your princess Iris’ brother right?”

“Yeah? But we’re not blood related. I’m just her brother in name and duty.”

The prince tilted his head. Was what I said really that hard to understand?

“You’re not blood related? W-, Which... means? You’re not prince Jadis? So who the heck are you?”

“The number one adventurer of Belzerg, Satou Kazuma.”

Despite my simple reply, the prince didn’t seem to comprehend what I was saying.

“...Ah, you mean you’re brother and sister with special circumstances? Well, in any case, princess Iris admires you like a brother, so I should also...”

As expected, this kid might just be an idiot prince.

“No no. Didn’t you already cancel your engagement with Iris?”

This time, time itself seemed to freeze.

“Hey hey, why isn’t that guy not moving? Is he alright?”

“Uhm, I think it’s best if we just leave him alone for now. Rather Kazuma, there are some things you mustn’t say, alright? Everyone decided to not touch on the subject, so why did you have to tell him?”

Although Aqua and Megumin whined about it, life remained in the prince’s eyes.

“T-, T-T-, That was... j-, just to keep the distance between my nation and Belzerg. I just wanted princess Iris to hate me, so I didn’t really mean it...! Also, I, too, was tricked by the prime minister, and furthermore, as a sign of our nation’s alliance and friendship...!!”

The uncharacteristically desperate prince, unlike from when we first met, showed a pleading gaze towards Iris.

Iris glanced towards me for a mere moment, and showed a troubled

expression.

“...Belzerg and Elroad will forever and ever be friends, so let’s also be friends forever.”

“PLEASE WAIITTTTTT!!”

Epilogue

As I gazed at the capital of Elroad, which trailed further and further away—

“Hey, in the end, we really didn’t do any real sightseeing or fun things did we?”

Murmured Aqua. She sat in the backseat of the carriage, whilst hugging her knees.

“The heck are you saying? Out of all of us, you have the highest likelihood of causing a mess wherever we go, so what the heck are you saying?”

“Hey wait a moment you bed-creeper NEET. If I had some more allowance this trip, I would’ve been able to enjoy myself much more. After we get back to Axel, increase my allowance! If you do that then I’ll take cooking duty for one day ok?”

This girl...!

“What did you say just now!? Did you just call me a bed-creeper NEET!? I have zero interest in you. How long do you think we’ve slept together in the stables? I didn’t do a single thing to you back then!”

“Weren’t you making those all those rustling sounds!? I mean, you slept next to a beautiful young woman like myself right? There’s no way you didn’t have any sexual fantasies, you lying NEET!”

This bitch!

Having reached my boiling point for the first time in a while, I – without a care for the moving carriage – walked from my seat next to the driver, to where Aqua was.

Now, how should I make her cry?

Seemingly detecting the incoming danger, Aqua raised her hands to surrender.

It’s too late for that.

As I was about to chastise her—

“Ahahahaha-!”

Iris, who sat beside Megumin, suddenly began to laugh in a strange manner.

“Ahahahahaha-! Ahahahahahaha-!”

Dumbfounded by Iris’ laughing, I reluctantly sat down beside Aqua.

“If you want me to forgive you, then take cooking duty for this week alright?”

“Sure, but be prepared to eat nattō three meals a day okay?”

<TL Note: Nattō is a type of fermented soybean that has a strong smell, flavor, and slimy/sticky texture. It’s fairly hard to eat more than once in awhile>

Iris looked at Aqua, who didn’t seem to have reflected at all.

“Every day is really fun when you’re around, onii-sama. Thank you for accepting this bodyguard request.”

And showed an innocent smile.

“No, it’s fine, I had a lot of fun of as well. The things that shocked me the most is that other than Iris, who has been with me for the shortest time, everyone else failed to see through my imposter. What the heck is wrong with you guys? How long have I been with each of you?”

Then, suddenly, a voice of protest came from the direction of the driver’s seat.

“Wait Kazuma, I had-, only I saw through you! I was tricked at first, but I confirmed that it wasn’t you immediately after that you know!?”

“You’re really not any better. Remember what you tried to get that imposter to do? That guy was actually slightly taken aback by what you did wasn’t he!?”

Megumin and Aqua abruptly turned their eyes away.

“I said this to prince Revi before, but I have confidence in my ability to judge people you see?”

Iris showed a confident smile.

“Hey Iris, whenever you admire Kazuma by calling him ‘onii-sama’, your eyes are always clouded you know?”

<TL Note: In Asian cultures, emotions (in particular, honesty) are often read by looking at the eyes rather than the mouth. ‘Eyes being clouded’ indicates lack of impartiality, inability to judge (honestly), and not being true to oneself.>

“Oh, says you, the self-proclaimed ‘cloudless’ Aqua-san. You couldn’t even see through the disguise of a monster, so what should you be called now? Huh?”

As Aqua covered her ears and pretended to not hear anything, I remembered something, and took it out of my pocket.

“Right. Iris, you were working the entire time so you didn’t get the chance to visit the town. It’s cheap, but I bought you a gift.”

I took out the small ring for children that I bought in town.

It’s just a cheap, 400 eris item. It’s a shame, but I forgot to go look for something a bit more expensive during our time there.

I thought that my cheap gift might be rejected, but Iris opened her eyes wide at the sight.

“Really? May I really have this?”

“Yeah, I mean, the ring that you always wore is gone now, isn’t it? The white mark there is really noticeable, so I wanted to buy you something to replace it.”

She, with utmost care and importance, received the cheap ring with both of her hands.



“Kazuma Kazuma, do you not have something like that for me as well? I’m a

girl of marriageable age, so if you give me something like that, I wouldn't be dissatisfied either."

I took out what I arranged for Megumin, who hurriedly rushed between Iris and I.

"Here, this is an Elroad rice cracker. Actually, this is was more expensive than Iris' ring you know?"

"....."

Megumin received the rice cracker bag with both hands.

Ignoring Megumin, who started eating the bags contents with a mixed expression—

"Kazuma-san Kazuma-san, what about me? Do you have some gift for me?"

"As for you, I have this rock that looks like it's blended with gold. I discovered it during our Dragon subjugation in the gold mines.""

I handed the rock that looked like gold ore to Aqua. She accepted it without any complaints, and wordlessly stared at it. Was she pleased?

Darkness, who was in the driver's seat, occasionally stole glances towards me.

Since you're driving, yours comes later.

Rather, now that I think about it, you guys are different from Iris. You all had the chance to go out to town to play around however you like, so was there ever a need to buy gifts for you guys?

As I was thinking about this....

"Heh-, Ehehehehe..."

Iris, who stared at the ring like some important treasure, suddenly began to giggle.

"Onii-sama! Ah, no... Erm, uhm..."

Iris, who attempted to say something, suddenly took a deep, resolved, breath.

"Thank you, onii-chan!"

Saying that, she showed a wide smile—

From the Digital Special Edition:

Side Story: The Goddess, Working Hard.

Eleven in the morning.

Aqua teeter-tottered down the stairs, still dressed in her pajamas. Perhaps she was still sleepy.

Then, Aqua laid down on the sofa and watched Megumin, who was on cooking duty today, prepare our lunch, which doubled as her breakfast.

Despite her apparent sleepiness, she gobbled twice the amount of food than everyone else, and returned to her position on the sofa.

She placed Emperor Zell on her stomach and began her afternoon nap.

One past noon.

After completing her afternoon nap, Aqua returned to her room and changed into her usual outfit.

In any case, it seems that she was planning to go out on a walk, since she had free time.

She begged Darkness, who was drinking black tea and reading a book, for extra change.

In exchange for dish-washing duty tomorrow, Darkness, whose reading was disturbed, gave Aqua some spare change.

Two past noon.

For some reason, an elderly man that lived nearby paid their respects to Aqua.

It was the gramps that was famous for loitering during the night. This might be dangerous, I suppose.

Aqua, who was happy after being worshipped, casted 'Heal' on the gramps and

went on her way.

Noticing a cat that was curled up and sleeping, she stared at it and stood still.

Although it seems like she wanted to pet the cat, she seemed to have abstained from doing it due to Chomusuke's usual rejection.

'It would be pitiful if I woke you up, so I will let you go this time' she boldly announced to herself. Then, nodding her head in satisfaction, she left the area.

By the way, the cat had been woken up by her loud voice.

Three past noon.

As the bell which indicated the passing of the hour rang, Aqua continued to walk around doing nothing in particular.

Spotting a crepe stall, she immediately used the money Darkness gave her a while back to buy a crepe.

Despite eating so much not so long ago, it seems like she's still planning to eat more.

It was possible that she treated 'a mid-afternoon snack at three' as a mission of sorts.

Then, she arrogantly announced that 'Today's crepes are not bad'. It seems that she was a regular at this crepe store.

Also, it seems that she was given some of the leftover uncooked batter from when the crepes had been cut.

Happily biting into her crepe, she continued on her way.

Three-thirty past noon.

Aqua barged in on a group of children that were making sand castles in the park.

Using 'Create Water' to wet the sand, she crafted a one-to-one scale sculpture of a goblin.

With a childish and triumphant expression on her face, she received praise from the children for her goblin creation.

I couldn't really tell who the child was, but – seemingly satisfied from the praise – Aqua told the children 'Modify it, destroy it, do whatever you like with it' and left.

By the way, the goblin was immediately destroyed by the dropkick of a mischievous child.

Four past noon.

Splashing her way into the town's fountain, she picked up a coin as though it was the natural thing to do.

Although the passing policeman, who warned her about her activity, should be the one to be angry, she was the one who got angry instead. Saying that 'the money that's thrown in the fountain is an offering to me, the one who controls water', she started a fight.

Seemingly understanding that Aqua was an Axis cultist by her words and actions, the policeman said 'alright alright I get it' with a displeased expression on his face, and quickly fled the scene.

It seems that he wanted to keep clear of trouble.

Four-thirty past noon.

Within a few minutes of entering Wiz's Magic Tool Store, Aqua left.

Following shortly after her, Vanir threw salt towards her. It seems that she was guilty of something and was driven out.

<TL Note: Salt is used to purify an area and drive away evil spirits.>

Pointing directly at Aqua's face, Vanir said something, and returned to the store. Then, the person who had been told something casted magic on the door.

The door began to shine with white light. It would appear that she casted some sort of barrier on the door in order to vent her anger.

Vanir, who was in the store, began to shout something, but Aqua covered her ears, pretended to not hear anything, and ran away.

Judging from the refined process, it seems that this was nothing new.

Five past noon.

Continuing to wander the streets, Aqua was thanked by a fish store owner for using 'Create Water' to make clean water for the fish, and then she angered the alcohol store owner by peering into the one of the alcohol barrels.

It seems that she was quite familiar with the shopping street. She would greet the store owners and be complimented for filling the water bottles with clean water. In any case, she seemed to be in a good mood.

She chewed on the dried squid that was given to her as thanks, and finally arrived at the Eris' cult's church.

Continuing to chew the dried squid, she joined the line for the distribution of rations to the poor. It seems that she was a regular here as well, and the Eris cult's priest sighed as she gave a piece of bread to her.

Then, she reentered the line again and again, and took bread again and again.

Finally, after being scolded and told to stop, she went off on her way, now, with a large amount of bread.

Six past noon.

Arriving at the Axis cult's church, Aqua began distributing bread to passersby alongside Cecily.

'The Eris cult is not the only ones who distribute rations to those who are less fortunate. The Axis cult does so as well.' Axis cult this, Axis cult that. She cried out such things.

...Having confirmed this much, I thought that I didn't need to do anything more, and returned home.

"—Hey Kazuma, listen to me. Today I did a lot of good deeds that are befitting of someone with a holy job, you know? I was worshipped by a grandpa after casting heal on him, I was praised by children, I sealed the store where a devil is living in, I was thanked by the people in the shopping street, and I performed welfare activities with the church. For my commendable, hard work, could I have some change..."

"To answer the question 'what the heck do you do on a daily basis', I observed

you since this morning using my 'Hide' skill, you know!? There's no way in hell you're a goddess, right!?"

From Gamers' First-Print Limited Edition

Side Story: The Princess, an Adolescent.

The great nation of Casinos, Elroad.

For one reason or another, despite being Iris' bodyguards, we were currently staying at a rather classy hotel.

And at a corner of the hotel, in Iris' room—

“—So Lalatina and I are acquaintances from when I was still a child. I admired Lalatina like a sister, and I often walked behind her.”

Sitting on a nearby chair, I joined Iris and Darkness as they talked about the past. They were in their pajamas and sitting on the bed.

“When I was still living in the castle, right? How nostalgic... When Iris-sama was still unable to speak well, I remember playing horsey horsey with her to get her to stop crying somehow...”

Saying that, Darkness showed a nostalgic, warm smile.

“Just curious, but ‘horsey horsey’ has nothing to do with your special interests right?”

“Don’t defile Iris-sama and I in your mind! Even I had a time when I was pure and innocent, ok!?”

Darkness glanced in my direction with a vexed expression.

“...A-, Are you saying that you’re no longer pure or innocent...?”

Towards my abridged reply, Darkness grabbed ahold of me.

“I’m saying that I’m no longer pure or innocent because of the various things that you’ve done to me! I’ve been seen naked by you. I’ve washed your back. I’ve been tied up by you, and now that I think about it, you’ve even taken off my underwear...!”

“EEEEHHHHH!?”

As Darkness angrily rattled on, Iris reflexively cried out.

“Geez you, what are you blurting out in front of Iris all of a sudden. Geez, as usual, your mere existence is a detriment to child education.”

“Y-Y-Y-Y-, You’re mistaken! Iris-sama, that was just a figure of speech of sorts, so...!”

Darkness, who was now exposed, began to panic.

“N-, Now that I think about it, onii-sama told me about this before, that there was a time where Lalatina washed his back...”

“What have you been teaching Iris-sama!? Oi, how much did you tell her!”

Hearing what Iris said, Darkness continued to dig her own grave.

‘How much did you tell her?’ she says. That’s basically the same as confirming everything that I’ve said.

“Ah... Lalatina, the Lalatina which I once admired as an onee-sama, has become an adult before I realized it. She’s going to a faraway place now, isn’t she...”

The eyes which once looked at her as a sister, were now looking at her as an adult woman. Darkness could not hide her bewilderment.

“You’re mistaken, Iris-sama! Despite what this man has told you, I’m sure that most of it was just accidents and...!”

“What do you mean by ‘accidents’? Just a little while back, you told me that you couldn’t take off your panties, and in the private space of the bathroom, you even told me to take off your underwear.”

“Kazuma, I’m begging you, just don’t say anymore!”

Witnessing our conversation, Iris began to giggle.

“I-, Iris-sama?”

To Darkness, who was perplexed by the turn of events, Iris happily laughed.

“Seeing onii-sama, who I think of as a brother, and Lalatina, who I think of as a

sister, fighting like this, it feels like a sibling scuffle.”

Dumbfounded, Darkness and I reflexively turned to meet each other’s gaze.

Since Iris wasn’t able to see her brother often, and doesn’t have any other siblings, she probably didn’t get the chance to have a sibling scuffle.

Darkness, seeing Iris’ warm smile—

“Iris-sama, this may be lacking in respect, but for the first time in a long while, shall we sleep together like sisters? Fortunately, the room is the highest-class that they have at this hotel, and as you can see, the bed is rather wide...”

“Yes! It would be just like when we were children... ..Uhm, onii-sama? Is there a problem?”

Smiling gleefully together with Iris, I excitedly bounced off my chair. In response, Iris turned and looked at me with puzzlement.

“No, if we’re going to sleep with the three of us as siblings, then I was going to change into my pajamas.”

“Go die!”

As I was bathed in Darkness’ irrational shouting, Iris bewilderedly said.

“Onii-sama wants to sleep with me as well? Uhm, if Lalatina is fine with that, I don’t really mind...”

“Iris-sama, do you understand what you’re saying!? I fully realize that it may be rude for me to voice this, but what you said just now was absolutely outrageous and idiotic!”

Whilst Darkness – expectedly – objected without any consideration for the time, I, who was given permission by Iris, hurriedly turned to head to my room to retrieve my pajamas and pillow...

“Lalatina, onii-sama is not the kind of person who would do anything when he’s sleeping with someone else. Without the agreement of the other party, he will absolutely not cross the line.”

“I-, Is that right...”

Oi.

“See Darkness? Despite you knowing me for a much longer time, even Iris understands me better. To start with, if the three of us are sleeping together, aren’t you the one who’s most likely to ‘amuse yourself’ in the situation? Listen Iris, this onee-san which you admire as a sister, entered the bath on her own accord despite me being inside it, lured me by saying ‘let’s become adults together’, and suddenly kissed me as well, alright?”

“Lala-!?”

“It’s a misun-...! Iris-sama, you’re mistaken! N-, No, It’s... P-, Please don’t look at me like that Iris-samaaaaa!”

From Toranoana’s First-Print Limited Edition

Side Story: ‘Axel’s Number One...’

<TL Note: There are some implied jokes here, which are explained in the ‘Extra Notes’ section after this>

Having slept well past noon, I sleepily walked down the stairs while sluggishly turning my head back and forth. It was then—

“Oh depraved shNEET! Eat my crimson fist and walk a righteous path in your next life!”

<TL Note: shNEET = shitty neet (クソニート)>

Megumin, who hid her right eye with one hand and took a very chuunibyou-like pose, snapped her fingers with her other hand and pointed at me.

“... I don’t know why you’re looking for a fight, but since you did it, I might as well take you on.”

“Owowowowowowow! Please stop, I apologize, so please stop!”

As I twisted the finger that was pointed at me, Megumin pleaded for mercy.

“So, what was that supposed to mean? If you cursed at me without any particular reason, I’ll use drain touch to absorb your magic power so you can’t do your ‘one day, one explosion’, alright?”

“P-P-P-P-, Please stop! Y-, Your thoughts are truly fearsome to behold. I think you’re even more devilish than Vanir!”

I don’t really understand what the big deal was with ‘being unable to use magic for one day’, but in any case, it had a great effect on Megumin.

As I released my hold on her finger, Megumin cautiously took several steps back.

“Actually, the Crimson Magic clansmen that live near Axel will occasionally gather together to talk about a variety of things.”

“...But I can’t think of any Crimson Magic clansmen that have left the village other than you and Yunyun. A bothersome clan like yours should be kept in the isolation facility called the ‘Village of Crimson Magic’ as much as possible.”

“Whose clan are you calling bothersome!? If we go for an interview with a mercenary or knight group, we’ll immediately be hired! We are Crimson Magic clansmen, who are in great demand no matter what adventurer guild we go to!”

Well, in any case, the Crimson Magic clansmen were the strongest magician organization in this world, but looking at this girl, I can’t help but suspect the truth behind that statement.

“So, what does being a part of this so-called ‘Crimson Magic clan’ have to do with cursing me?”

“Actually, in our next gathering, the Crimson Magic clansmen living nearby will have a showdown to decide who has the coolest signature phrase.”

...Were the Crimson Magic clansmen really the strongest magician group in the world?

As I showed a gaze of amazement, Megumin, who noticed that—

“What’s that look supposed to mean!? For Crimson Magic clansmen, choosing a signature phrase is an important duty. In some sense, it is like one’s dying last words, or a quote of a lifetime. Something like that.”

“So was it your plan for ‘oh depraved shNEET’ or something along those lines to be your quote of a lifetime?”

“It’s a misunderstanding. That was just me merely stating my thoughts when I

saw your depraved and pathetic appearance after waking up.”

Hearing what Megumin said, I held her with an iron grip and activated ‘Drain Touch’.

“W-W-W-W-WAIT! I apologize for what I said, so take anything but my magic power!”

—One week later.

“...Hey, why do I have to accompany you?”

For some reason, I was dragged along to the signature phrase showdown between Crimson Magic clansmen.

“Why not? You have free time anyways. Didn’t you waste the entirety of yesterday pulling out the thorns of Aqua’s cactus one by one using tweezers? Today, I’ll allow you to witness my cool side. I will make sure that the household name of ‘Axel’s number one phrase-user’ falls into my hands.”

“There was a meaning behind that you know? Not only did I kill a lot of time, I even got to see Aqua, who had sneakily drank the high-class neroid that I treated with utmost care, bawling.”

“After that, Aqua kept spamming ‘Heal’ on the cactus. When I saw it this morning, it had multiplied several times in size. A grown cactus is really clever, so if you get close to it from now on, it’ll probably send thorns flying at you.”

For real?

—Although it’s already unreasonable that plants in this world are sentient, it seemed that they were able to feel anger as well.

“Hm? Kazuma-san? H-, Hey Megumin, why did you bring Kazuma-san with you!?”

The girl who was bothered by my presence, was none other than the girl who carried common sense despite being in this town.

Was this the supposed meeting place?

From the park that had been taken over by Crimson Magic clansmen, Yunyun,

who noticed my presence, called out to us.

“Well met. It appeared to me that this man was quite lacking in understanding of the importance of signature phrases for us Crimson Magic clansmen, so I forcibly brought him along.”

“Stop! It’s embarrassing! I don’t really understand the importance of it either, so don’t drag an ordinary person like Kazuma-san into this!”

Noticing the commotion, and seeing me, who they haven’t met before, the other Crimson Magic clansmen seemed to be itching to introduce themselves.

From them, I could hear murmurs of ‘Dragged along? Joining at the last minute?’ and other such things.

“Geez, you’re too loud Yunyun. I never said that Kazuma was going to join, did I?”

“AHHH I’m so sorry! Kazuma-san, I’m so sorry, it’s my fault!”

Behind Yunyun, who apologized on the verge of tears, the Crimson Magic clansmen trembled in excitement as they looked at me. The seed of ‘wanting to respond to their expectations’ was borne inside me.

Signature phrase..... A cool signature phrase, huh.

“—Well then, it’s unanimously decided that Satou Kazuma, who joined at the last minute, has the coolest signature phrase!”

“Why is Kazuma number one here!? Isn’t this weird? Hey isn’t this weird!? There’s no way he could dish out such cool signature phrases like that in such a ‘bang bang bang bang’ manner!”

“The sickness that spreads through you guys is incomparable to the one that spreads in my nation. There’s no way that the chuunibyou-stained phrases left by my ancestors would ever lose.”

“One more time! Please say those things that you said just now one more time please!”

I became Axel's number one household name.

Extra Notes:

– For those that might not know, household name stands for ‘a person or thing that is well known by the public.’

– A minor play on words: When Kazuma says ‘sickness that spreads through you guys...’, the word for ‘sickness’ (病) is the ‘byou’ (病), in ‘chuunibyou’ 中二病, which stands for eighth-grade syndrome.

– For the punchline, remember that they did all that in the public park. Kazuma shouted all those signature phrases in public... which is why he became a ‘household name’.

Author's Afterword

First, allow me to thank you for buying the tenth volume. I am Akatsuki Natsume, who – in the more-than-one year since I've moved to Saitama – has basically been a shut-in.

Even though I'm finally living thirty minutes from Akihabara, I really haven't fully enjoyed the city.

I'm not really especially busy you see? I just waste a lot of time at home playing games.

However, for some reason, I'm living more like a sage than when I was still living in the mountains.

I think that this kind of author's-situation-update is pretty pointless, so let's talk about something else.

Right now, ‘Continued, Gifting this Wonderful World with Explosions’ is being serialized on the Sneaker Bunko's home page, Sneaker WEB.

A while back, there was a popularity poll that was held with the anime-adaptation, and I began to plan a side story based on the character that won first place.

At first, I was only thinking about writing a bonus short story, but I never thought that there would be this many votes. I thought that ‘If it’s just a couple pages, then people’ll get angry wouldn’t they’, and began to quickly work on the web serialization.

<TL Note: She’s talking about the side stories that come with the first-print editions of the volumes (which, by the way, are also included after this afterword)>

As a result, Megumin, who won first place, got her second spin-off. For those interested, by all means, go ahead.

Also, right now, there are also a lot of mangas – The main story and anthology in Monthly Magazine Dragon-Age, The explosion series in Monthly Magazine Comic-Alive, and the 4-koma in Web Comic Clear – currently serialized. If you’d like, please read those as well.

This volume was about the little sister that we haven’t met in a long time, but the problem children group is set to make a reappearance next volume, so please look forward to it!

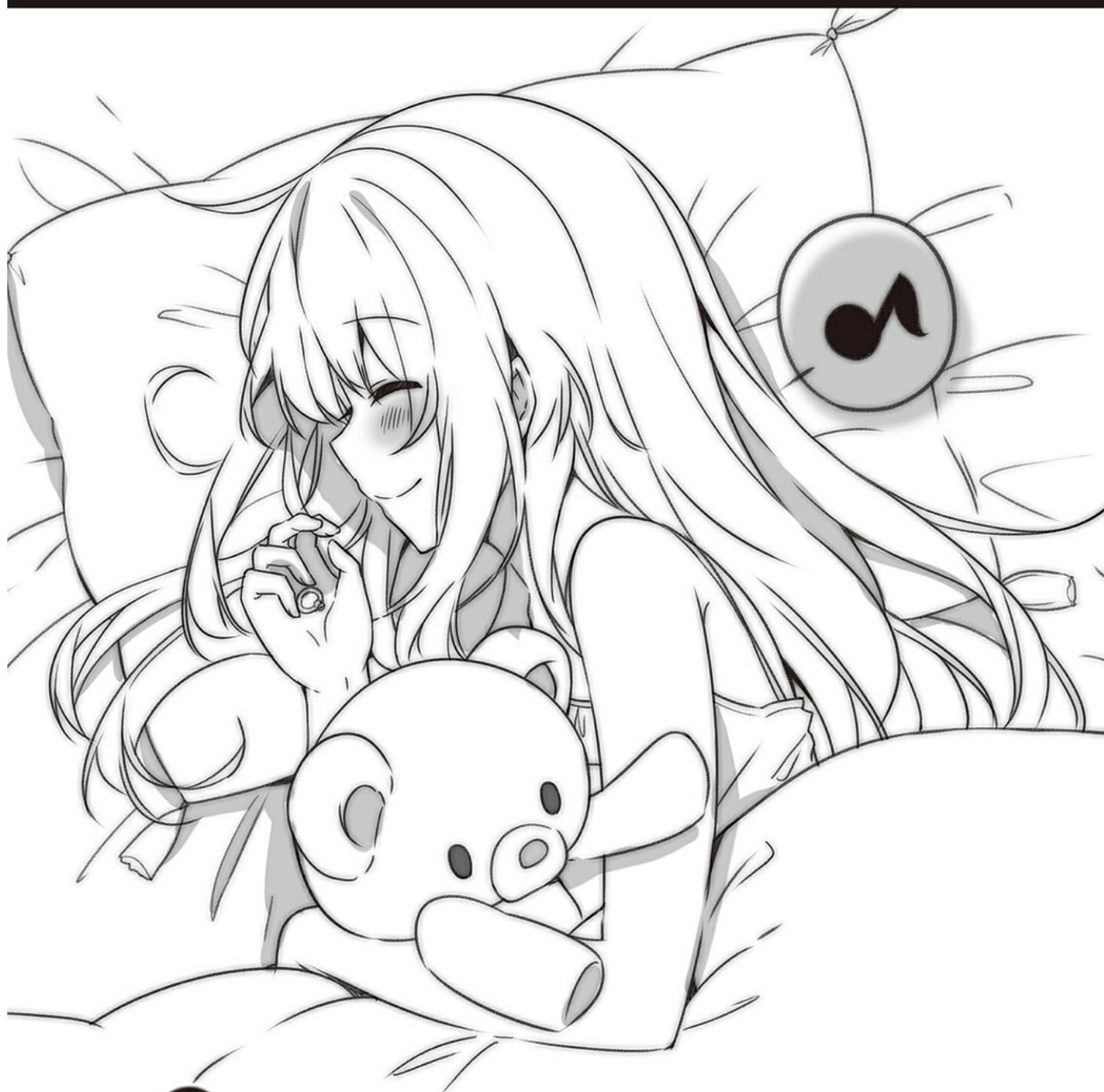
That said, this volume was able to be released without any troubles thanks to the help of the illustrator Mishima Kurone-sensei, the man-in-charge S-san, designer-san, proofreader-san, marketing-san, and a large number of other parties that were involved.

Each and every single one of them has my appreciation for their contribution in the creation of this book.

Above all, I’d like to gift all the readers who have this book in hand, with my sincere gratitude!

<TL Note: Author is making a pun of the title>

Akatsuki Natsume



ATO GAKI

Iris-san,
in a good mood after receiving the ring

Mishima Kurone
2016.

INEX



I WON'T BE LEAVING THE CASTLE THIS TIME AROUND. I'VE DECIDED TO LIVE HERE NO MATTER WHAT.



IF I CAN LIVE HERE AS WELL, I DON'T MIND EITHER.

DECIDED



DID IT



STOP BEING SELFISH ALREADY YOU GUYS! COME ON, LET'S GO H... EH, ISN'T THERE AN EXTRA PERSON HERE?



KOMEKKO!?
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
YOU CAN'T LEAVE HOME LIKE THAT!

HOME WENT 'KA-BOOM' AND DISAPPEARED



!!!!??



COMING SOON!!

GIFTING this
WONDERFUL WORLD
with BLESSINGS!!

Translator's Afterword

First of all, thanks for reading my translation! I'd also like to thank my editors, Ruzenor and Deus, who are willing to edit at a moment's notice. Finally, I'd like to thank my raw-buyer and the participants of the support-a-series program on my site, who made it possible for me to get and translate every limited-edition short story for volume 10.



I just bought a cheap drawing tablet a few days ago, so I decided that I would try drawing something, the result of which is to the left. Hopefully you can recognize it, but it's Iris from the dragon scene (lol).

For my first time drawing, it's not really all that bad I suppose. My goal is to draw this picture once a year-ish to see how much I've improved.

(To be fair, I think the sword turned out pretty nice.)

Also, the anime S2 has started airing, and best girl **cough** Yunyun **cough** finally appears! Best boy **cough** Vanir **cough** is set to appear as well!

Finally, please enjoy the following short stories, and see you next volume!

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